A VOZ

Uma história de superação, crescimento espiritual e felicidade

3ª edição

KAT TORRES

coisasdakat: mais de 1,3 milhão de seguidores

MATRIX

For all that is, that was, and that is yet to be, I am grateful; in the name of the Light that exists within me, within you, and within everything else, I serve.

The events in this book arose from real experiences lived by the author. The teachings and messages were transmitted through the Voice and through mediumistic and physical situations that occurred in real life. The purpose of this work is solely to serve humanity and to comfort it, confronting it with higher truths that come from a silent Voice that saves, guides, and frees one from fear and pain, bringing light and peace through the supreme understanding given to all those who listen to it. This book is not religious. However, the author wishes to make it clear that, despite not following any specific religion, she bows before all existing religions and respects them, as she believes that all serve the same God and all preach love.

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A story of overcoming, spiritual growth, and happiness.

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I want to dedicate this book to you, dear reader, and to the followers and fans of my Instagram page, who express so much love and trust in me every day! I also dedicate it to you, dear souls who 'listen' to me, and who came here in search of knowledge, peace, and happiness. I want to say that I feel honored by your trust, that I lift my thoughts by loving you in return, and that you, like the angels, bring so much light to my day.

We are ONE; I feel you and I understand you.

I want to thank the Sinhorini family, who welcomed me into their home and treated me like a daughter during this long process of nearly a year.

Sérgio, Giulia, Rosilaine, and Bruna Sinhorini, I love you.

Author's Note

I refer to many people as "boy" ["menino"] and "girl" ["menina"] in real life. This is not a joke, nor is it my intention to belittle anyone. The reason is that we are all children. I believe that there are no bad people, bad souls, or people of bad character—there is only immaturity. Immaturity of the soul and of existence on Earth: a person does what they know best; if they do not do better now, it is because they have not yet learned, but like everyone else, they will evolve and get there.

This also relates to psychological studies that state that all problems can be healed if the 'inner child' is healed, since most problems in adult life begin in childhood. Therefore, especially when you try to understand people or put yourself in their place, see them as children. This was a way I found to judge less and love more.

Imagine that, in the heat of an argument—whether in a bar fight or with your mother at home—you pictured the person in front of you simply as an innocent, frightened child acting in self-defense. Your behavior would change if she were a little child, wouldn't it? Well then—what if I told you that she truly is just a little child?

Only our appearance changes and ages on Earth; our 'super-image' (our greater essence—the one that governs our decisions, dictates our behavior and the way we position ourselves in the world—our fears, longings, difficulties, loves, passions, desires…) remains that of a child, until the day we die.

Introduction

I am 6 years old — all right, I'm not 6; I'm closer to 30, with the face of a 20-year-old and the thinking of a 50-year-old… No, no, perhaps the thinking is more like 5,000! That's why I don't even have an age, but 'now' I am 6 years old and I am home alone. Alone? Hmm… again, I'm not sure if I'm alone… I don't even know if I'm at home… Is my 'home' really here?

As you can see, I am a child, an adult… A creature of many questions, but do not dare think that I am confused! I simply see beyond people — for lack of a better name, let's call them that. I see and feel in a way that is different from other people.

For example, it's true, I was alone, but what about the animals that were in my house? I don't know — can one say that I was alone just because there were no people present? And beyond that, am I limited to the walls of the house? Because if I look out the window, I know there are thousands of people outside. Yes, I said thousands, because on my street I could only see about ten, maybe twenty… Wow, how difficult this is — so how am I going to begin this story? 'There I was, with thousands of people'… or better yet, billions?

And even if I say ‘billions,’ am I then limiting myself to this planet? To this galaxy? To this dimension? As you can see, even mathematics is not an exact law. When we speak of laws, of what is exact, and of mathematics, I ask you: to which culture, country, galaxy, world, dimension, or spiritual plane are you limiting yourself when you try to make that number ‘exact’?

Well, by now I can already hear society saying, ‘Stop being crazy, Kat!’ But I was told that to write a book or make a film, one must establish the character of the story in the very first lines. In truth, no one told me that — it was I myself who, by watching the first minutes of a film and reading the first lines of some books, came to that conclusion. At least for that, being myself, without filters, in the opening lines served its purpose. Now you already know that the protagonist of this book — who is also its writer, in this case me — has no age, has no limits, and does not think or feel like the other flowers, oops, people. Another thing about this character is that they do not distinguish names; everything is everything, and nothing exists. Does that make sense? I’m sure it does, because you know this character very well: it is you!

‘But you just said that this character was you!’

I know — my communication with sweet, I mean, people, has never been very coherent, but come with me and I’ll explain everything along the way! Or rather, the ‘Voice’ explains:

Once, in order to go out and celebrate Carnival, my teenage sister left me home alone. I was about six years old. We lived on a high floor, and she said to me, ‘Come here!’ Looking out the window, she pointed to the sea of people down below celebrating Carnival and said, ‘If you feel lonely, look out the window and you will see that there are thousands of people to protect you,’ and then she left. My family did this quite a bit with me in the years that followed; however, that night, I cried — not because I felt alone, but because I missed my sister being there with me…”

She asked me not to tell my mother, and I didn't, but an aunt saw her on the street and spread gossip (how cliché!). Later, I didn't understand why my mother was furious, arguing with her for having left me 'alone.' I, trying to protect her, said, 'But Mom, she didn't leave me alone — she left me with thousands of people'…

And that was how, at six years of age, I learned about perspective — that in life everything is simply a matter of point of view. And speaking of point of view, they never understood mine that what hurt me was not loneliness, but the fact that they preferred to be anywhere else rather than with me.

I was a sad child. My mother would ask why I cried all the time, but I didn't want to say that it was because she, despite not working, was always 'far away' and busy; because I knew she preferred being with my father rather than with me, and I didn't want to make her sad with my complaints. As for my sister, the same applied. So, since I didn't lie, but also didn't want to bother anyone, I decided it was best to take on the role of the quiet, sad child — which didn't make me very appealing. Soon not even the gossiping aunts, with whom my mother would leave me for long periods in their homes, wanted me around anymore… I really was annoying and had the bad mood of a grown-up, so I never blamed my aunts, and I still don't.

Today I understand who I was and everything I went through, and, as bad as it may have been, every little thing helped me evolve greatly and assisted me in many aspects of my life, both in the past and in the present. And that is what this book is about — SPIRITUAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND LIFE EVOLUTION.

CHAPTER 1
The child

— I am 2 years old, and I like the ‘light that comes from outside.’ There is a woman who is always close to me. I don’t like her; she hurts me, she causes me extreme pain every time the light comes. I already spend the entire night sad because the light has gone away, and in the morning the woman comes and makes me cry…

There are some beings who speak a language different from mine; they sleep with me and are very different from that woman. They always let me do whatever I want — when the woman locks me here in this cage and I feel horrible, they come like liquid, pass through the bars, and curl up on top of me, but she comes and takes them away when she sees them… I don’t understand why; I think this woman exists to make me cry… But the strange thing is that when she is far away, I feel like crying too, and then I can’t understand why I cry.

This book may seem like fantasy, but it is a real story — in fact, several stories.

— Those beings you talk about, they are called ‘cats.’

— Who said that? I don’t see you. Them who?

— Them, the humans. You are a girl and you live on Planet

Earth, and that woman you speak of did not come to make you suffer, as you said [laughs]. She takes you away from the cats because she thinks they cause you allergies.
— Where are you? I don't see my cage anymore.
— Your bed, you mean… What do you like the most?
— I like the light that comes from outside.

At that moment, a blinding light appeared.

— Then I am the Light — replied the Voice, in a tone that sounded like a smile.

— How did you do that? — asked the thin little girl, with a round belly and frightened, now surrounded by light.

— I didn't do it; you did. When you told me that you liked the light, you thought of it, and it came into being — LIGHT! Your thought created it.

— But what about when it goes away, and I become so sad and cry, thinking of it, asking it to come back, and it doesn't?

— That's because you forget this magical condition of yours when you are awake… You are now asleep, you forget your earthly limitations and travel freely through everything. On Earth there is an energy of 'earthly consciousness' that is far too strong; humans were taught to think alike, and this so-called consciousness creates a magnetic field that makes it difficult — even impossible — for them to communicate with me when they are 'awake.' What you are experiencing is a dream; I have met you many times, but you don't remember… You forget everything as soon as you wake up, or a few minutes later… But during the day I send you people and events that make you, so to speak, 'hear again' our conversations while awake…

— Look, the 'light' you like is already here! — said the Voice, making the girl turn toward the bedroom window, which had now become visible again.

— We talked for hours… This Light you refer to on Earth is called the Sun. Oh, and that woman who

has just entered the room to wake you is your mother. Be kind to her, and today, when she comes to comb your hair, do not feel so much heaviness in your heart; she is only untangling knots… One day, everything will make sense. And when these knots make sense, other ‘knots’ will form. Those, in turn, will need answers, and when the time comes, they too will make sense — and so on.

That day the child woke up and, just as the Voice had said, she did not remember anything from the conversation. Her mother came to comb her hair and the girl, as usual, cried and complained a lot, shouting loudly and, as always, waking her older sister, who slept in the bed beside her.

— Be quiet! — the sister shouted, ill-tempered, thrashing about in bed.

— Hey! Don’t talk like that to your sister! I am her mother! — the mother snapped back at the older daughter, gripping the little girl’s hair even more tightly.

The sister then, trying not to cause trouble for herself, placed herself in front of the child and, in a gentle voice, as if she had been possessed by a breath of love, said:

— She isn’t hurting you, my love, she is just taking the knots out of your hair…

The child then fell silent for a moment. Her head still hurt, and her mother had already said that phrase more than a thousand times, but today, for some strange reason, it sounded different. It was as if she had felt it somewhere before — yes, felt it, because what the words did was cause a sensation of comfort; in that moment they brought relief, a warm breeze; they did not become merely words in her ears…

It was the Voice, speaking through the sister.

CHAPTER 2

The understanding of the world

— I hate my life, I am 9 years old and I don't like anyone, and I think no one likes me either. I feel so alone… The only person I love is my cat.

Dengoso, the cat, slept at the foot of the girl's bed while she cried silently and full of anger, as usual.

She thought these things as if someone were listening, 'because if they heard me, maybe they would know how awful they are, but they don't hear me even when I speak out loud…' She did not talk to herself nor converse with herself; she narrated a story the way one narrates an important film. She had her own story, her own version of all the facts, and no one could take that away from her. No one could judge her, nor laugh and make light of her feelings, because those words — which sometimes even turned into poetry in her notebook — existed in their true meaning only inside the girl's mind.

But what she did not know was that, because those words were so alive to her, so lucid, so full of force, they materialized and became alive in the material dimension as well — transforming everything around the girl into the words she herself created in her mind.

— You finally fell asleep; I was waiting for you," said the Voice.

— Yeah, I hate my life… Not even asleep do I get any peace; I've been having horrible nightmares every night. My life is a nightmare when I'm awake and a nightmare when I'm asleep. I think my father is going to leave home again today… Mom said that if he doesn't go, we will, but we have nowhere to go! To tell the truth, I'd rather even go live on the street; I'd do anything to stay far away from him.

— You haven't been having only horrible nightmares! I've been coming here every night to talk to you!

— Who are you, after all? And where are you? I can't see you!

— Where would you like to be?

— Hummm… the girl murmured, thinking for a moment.

— There was a board game that my sister used to play with her friends and never let me play…

— …Xuxa no Mundo Doce Mel, the Voice interrupted, guessing her thought. — You've been there many times; it's one of your favorite places.

— I have?…

Suddenly, everything around the girl turned into a board game, and there was nothing fantastical or magical about it — it was real! She slid along the rainbow path with Praga, ran through the ravine, played with Xuxo, ate bread from the bread tree and thought, *"No child in this world is happier than I am!"* and her imagination kept creating a world even more incredible than the one invented by the author of the board game. She imagined colorful balloons flying through blue skies, imagined clouds full of cats falling from the sky; the fluffy cats, like clouds, smiled, and as she flew with them and had fun among the sweets, the Voice continued to speak:

— Well, now that you're happier, we can talk. By the way, did you know that there are no balloons or flying cats in that game?"

You created them. Because back on Earth you live with many cats, and they bring you joy and a sense of safety, now that you felt joy and safety your mind involuntarily caused the cats to materialize in your present reality. The colorful balloons flying around you are also of your own making. You have loved balloons since you were very little, because one day, when you were about two years old in your earthly age, the one who is your father there gave you, on one of the walks through the forest you loved so much, a bunch of colorful balloons… Those balloons brought you a lot of laughter.

— What do you mean there are no balloons in this board game? Of course there are — they're around the ravine, near the rainbow path. I know this game well.

— Those are gummy candies; they have always been colorful gummy candies, not balloons, said the Voice with a playful and serene air.

When the girl looked, certain that there would be colorful balloons beside the ravine, she saw that they were gummy candies. The last balloons that had emerged from her thoughts were still floating in the sky, and, not understanding, she looked at the gummy candies, at the balloons, and at the sky… Somewhat confused, not even knowing where to direct her words as she spoke, since the Voice came from nowhere — there wasn't even a sound; it simply appeared inside her own head, as if it too had been created by her, and at the same time not. It arose from the same place where ideas arise, as if it were from the girl herself. The only certainty she had that the Voice was not a product of her imagination was a feeling that existed only within her. Along with everything there was a strange sensation of having known the Voice for many years and at the same time never having heard it before… of having lived all of that once before, and at the same time feeling that she was living it inside that board game on that night and in that reality — which was a sunny afternoon — for the very first time.

— I know, said the Voice, light and happy, continuing after a long pause, as if it could read the girl's thoughts and understand them better than she herself could. — The MESSAGE I have come to bring you today is exactly this: you do not have bad nightmares all night long — you make them happen. Your reality on Earth is not easy, mainly because you place too much emphasis on bad things, allowing the good ones to go unnoticed within you; the bad ones, yes — those are cried over, remembered, and repeated a thousand times in your 'mental diary,' and that is why, when you go to sleep, that is what materializes in your dreams, in the form of monsters, in the form of chases, in the form of things that frighten you. Because what materializes in the world of dreams and in the world of Earth is not exactly what is lived, but what is felt — what one allows oneself to feel, what one gives the greatest importance to… So, if you feel a lot of fear during the day, what will materialize is that which brings you fear, and so on.

The following morning, the girl lamented to her mother in the kitchen that she did not consider herself normal, because she had heard people at school talking about good dreams, while she had never had a single good dream in her entire life! *"How can I be normal?! I've never had any good dreams! Even in that I'm unlucky!"* The mother gave her a look of reproach and went back to arguing with the father, who, at the living room door with a suitcase, was leaving home for the second time in that very month.

The girl, then, mortified with embarrassment, waited for the neighbors to stop staring so she could go down the stairs and head to school. At that moment, she thought to herself once again: *"Why do I exist? God, please take me away from here, I can't stand this life anymore!"* She said goodbye to her beloved cat, apologizing for her parents' shouting and saying she would be back soon to keep him company, to give him love and… she was interrupted by her mother, who, now that the father had already left, transferred the shouting to her, ranting that she was going to be late for school.

That day the girl missed the bus and had to run to school, which was a 50-minute walk from her home. It was a sunny summer day, which irritated her greatly, since the heat-induced fatigue exhausted her even more, and the sweat that made her hair stick to her neck only increased her fury toward the world.

She arrived at school late, was scolded by the teacher and, as usual, became the butt of jokes for the entire class. During recess she had to hide so as not to become a punching bag for the other children, who, like her, also came from poor and troubled families and, like her, through neglect, lack of love, or lack of care, felt only anger toward the world and also did not see the Sun…

They did not enjoy the beautiful afternoon, nor did they give thanks for the joy of each other's company, as most of the children did at the wealthy school on the next block, at the end of the street. She then thought, *"Why not me? Why wasn't I born rich?"* and hated herself a little more before hating the rest of the world.

She went to the bathroom, hiding from a group that was engaged in some kind of crazy game in which a card was used and passed from one mouth to another. *"I don't know how they're capable of such an absurd thing,"* she thought. Even trying to go unnoticed, the classmates in the game shouted the nicknames that referred to her thinness and her super-short hair — cut by her mother, who said that long hair was for grown-ups. *"Short, Chanel-style, only above the ear, looking like the singer Nick from the Backstreet Boys,"* the girl would always say, indignant.

She wondered how a person could have such an unhappy life. She went into the bathroom and, noticing her thin legs, said to herself, *"Those animals are right — I really do have horrible legs, thin and horrible! I'm going to take a supplement and I'm going to get super thick, beautiful legs… and they'll see!"*

After hating her legs a bit more and pouring out some words of self-loathing and dissatisfaction with their shape, she bravely left the bathroom in a hurry, with her little hair brushing the height of her nose and her thin little neck that felt a chill, afraid of running into yet another "wrong sort," one of those people we always know exactly who they are at school.

Returning to the classroom, she thought of her mother crying at home, of her father who would certainly come back drunk and making an even bigger scene, breaking the gate or threatening to throw everything belonging to her and her mother out of the house, as he usually did. She felt pity and hatred for both of them, but above all pity for herself, for not even being able to copy the lesson from the board in time. Out of the corner of her eye, then, trying not to be noticed, she copied the scribbles of the classmate sitting beside her, and at that moment she thought: *"If only I had a single friend in this hell of a classroom, I could ask to borrow their notebook later… If I had at least one friend in this hell of a life, maybe I could ask for help… I would be less unhappy… Or maybe not…"*

The parents had moved many times — house to house, city to city, state to state — because of the father's drinking and his adventurous spirit: because of the drinking, since he couldn't keep any job, and because of the adventurous spirit, because instead of looking for another job next door, he preferred to venture far from home, in another city, in a completely different state… The girl, still so young yet already so perceptive (perhaps even because she had lived through so many cultures), at nine years of age already understood that her father did this precisely to escape the family a little, but her mother, either for not understanding or out of sheer emotional need, followed him and took the girl along — who, growing more unhappy by the day, resisted. She resisted only a little, however, because she did not want to make her mother suffer, whom she thought was 'already suffering enough'.

So, at the second school, in the second state during that same school year, she would hurl back yet another insult — mentally, of course, since she was unable to speak to the bullies, boys and girls alike, who were two, three, even five years older than she was. Thanks to her intelligence, she was ahead in school and made her mother proud, but that only made her an even easier target in the hands of those who had been there longer.

She was 'the new girl' everywhere. A fish out of water, without roots, without friends, without a place to belong. She always felt strange; it was as if she did not belong to her neighborhood, to her home, to the world… *'The world is a great misunderstanding,'* she would say, *'everything is wrong.'*

After everything, she headed back home — but not before being mocked once again by the 'big girls' at school. These, unlike Kat, the protagonist of this story, were popular, already had developed breasts, and spoke to the boys in soft voices. Kat always tried to get closer. Innocent, she fell into the power games of those who mocked the poor girl, playing tricks on her and humiliating her whenever they could.

That day, they made her take the wrong bus, and our girl, who already had a poor sense of direction — never feeling like she knew where she was —, influenced by the older girls, boarded a bus with them that went in the completely opposite direction. Laughing like hyenas, they jumped off the bus and told Kat to keep riding and that she would soon arrive home.

Much later, at the bus's final stop, desperate and terrified — by then not only of being lost, but also of being beaten by her mother —, she had no idea where she was. She started walking, asking for directions, taking other buses that supposedly went toward home, and, after much anguish, arrived four hours later than expected. Desperate, she began thinking about what she would invent to tell her mother — she hated lying, but her mother already suffered so much, and she did not want to upset her even more by telling her about her stupid classmates and what they did to her.

When she opened the door, however, she realized that there was no one there. *'At least that,'* she thought. She went in, took a deep breath, and lay down on the bed with her eyes stillwide open, unable to believe what had happened to her.

How could a simple walk home from school, which was only a 50-minute walk away, have turned into such a saga, such an adventure? *'I guess everything really is relative,'* she thought. *'Sometimes 50 minutes can turn into four hours… or the rest of your life, because, depending on what had happened to me, I might never have come back.'* She thought about the crimes that happened in the city, which that year had been elected the most dangerous in Brazil, and how crime rates and the number of deaths increased every day, especially involving children and teenagers. She replayed in her mind all the risky places she had been that afternoon, without having had the slightest idea of what could happen.

Then she became aware of the presence of the cat, Dengoso, who, as always, watched her from atop the nightstand, or the window, or the top of the bunk bed — from wherever he could see her from a higher plane, depending on the house they were living in at the time.

— What are you looking at? — she asked the cat, who stared fixedly into her eyes, motionless, as if movement or words were unnecessary. — Wow, you're so strange! It seems like you know what I've been through… Like you listen to me and talk to me through your gaze. I can even hear you sometimes. What if you're a person in a cat's body, fooling humans? What if you really do talk?! Oh! My God, you talk! I'm sure you talk! Once I saw a movie where a guy's dog talked! And the man spent his whole life trying to get rich and famous by making the dog talk in front of people… But the animal only talked to him — it wouldn't talk in front of anyone, no matter how much he insisted! I don't remember how the movie ended. I think I fell asleep before the end; it was already dawn… Do you think the guy got rich and famous? That he managed to prove to everyone that his dog talked? What do you think, Dengoso? Come on, tell me — I know you can talk! And if you talk in front of people, I'll be able to prove that I'm the only girl in the world who has a talking cat! We'll be rich and famous, and then we'll get out of this shitty life we live. I'll buy a house for Mom, and she'll finally be able to get rid of my father!… No, there won't be space for my sister… I'm sorry! She can stay here with this bedroom. The dream of her life was always to have a room just for herself, wasn't it? Well then — she'll be happy here!"

The girl went on:

— Come on, Dengoso, talk! Please! Doesn't it sound like a happy life? Well then! It wouldn't cost you anything! What are you afraid of? That your life would change and you'd have a lot of commitments on your schedule? That you wouldn't be able to sleep all day anymore because you'd be famous and would have to go on lots of TV shows? Don't be selfish — it would be very beneficial for us! Think about us a little! I also promise I'll talk to them; I'll tell the hosts that you can't have a very packed schedule because you like sleeping, and that you need to sleep many hours a day to be happy.

Don't worry, I'll protect you and look after your interests, I promise. You'll be a star, and stars can do whatever they please!

The girl still asked the cat:

— What's wrong now? Don't you trust me?

The cat had been with the girl since she was four years old, and now he really did seem deeply involved in a conversation with her, sitting in the same spot on the furniture, staring at her fixedly, as if saying: *"Yes, I'm afraid of stardom, so I prefer to remain silent… I'm not a cat who likes to talk — after all, humans never listen anyway. It would be a great waste of time and feline wisdom. No indeed, thank you very much."*

At that moment, the mother arrives with the father shouting; they pass by the closed bedroom door and the girl thanks God that they didn't come in this time… Just in case, she goes under the bed, as usual, because she felt safe there — or locked in the bathroom, the only place where she could think about life in such a noisy house, where no one noticed anyone — and when they did notice one another, they fought, complained, or assigned some impossibly boring and unpleasant chore to be done.

It was better to stay under the bed, hidden; that way they bothered her less… And in this way she also escaped the sordid comments of her drunken father, who said horrible things in order to hurt her mother or to uncover her 'secrets' — which, in his paranoid drunk mind, existed, but only there. The mother was a saint, an Amélia, humiliated and driven off by the father daily, 'a poor woman,' as she was made to be, and as she truly was.

Even without seeing the girl, they would call her by name when they wanted to drag her into the argument: 'Come here, Katiuscia, come here! Where are you!?' If it was the father shouting, she did not respond, but if it was the mother, she did: she would come out from under the bed first, before answering, pretending she had never been there (yes, because it was her hiding place, her refuge, and if they knew, it would no longer be!). 'Come here! I want you to be a witness… blah, blah, blah.' It was always that same witness story… Before, it had been that story with the sister, but she was already an adult, so now it was the girl's turn. *'What a fate is mine,'* she thought, *'this will never end!'*

After everything — from physical exhaustion and from life itself — the girl finally fell asleep.

— You hardly sleep at all! It's not good to sleep only two hours a night every day! Don't you feel tired? — said the Voice.

— Who said that? No, I never feel tired. I hate bedtime! I don't understand why it exists! If it were up to me, we'd stay awake our entire lives. For me, bedtime only serves to bring fear and nightmares.

— Well, I tell you that sleeping is very important! That is how humans connect with us and with the plane from which they came**.**

— What are you talking about? Connect?

— Yes. In fact, to be more specific, what you live on Earth is what is a 'dream'; the Real World itself is somewhere else… And that is why sleep and the act of sleeping exist — which, in truth, are meant to 'recharge energies' and to be in contact with the Real World, in a certain way. Human beings need this in order to live better, understand everything better, and be healthy, since health comes from the mind. That is why nights of sleep are extremely necessary, and it is also why, when a human goes a long time without sleeping, their mental confusion increases, causing sadness and even more doubts.

— Hmm, I don't know, I don't understand humans; they're strange little things… But today, at least, I was awake doing something I like — writing poems and drawing.

— Yes, I saw your drawings; they're very good! You draw beautiful dresses! Will you work in fashion when you grow up?

— No, not at all! I think this whole fashion thing is ridiculous! I just like drawing women in period dresses; I don't know why… I'm going to be a veterinarian and take care of animals, which are the only things I love in this world.

— But what about theater, and drawing? I thought you wanted to be an actress, to shine in cinema!

— Yes, that too! Do you think I can be both? But I never wanted to do TV; I only like theater. I don't even like watching television — let alone being on it… it's not for me. My father said that I'm not going to be anything, and that life is hard… That nowadays I think I can be everything and want to be everything, but that 'that's not how life really is. When you grow up, you'll see how hard everything is!' What do you think he meant by that? He also says he won't accept a daughter who is a model or an actress, and he fights a lot with my mother over that. He always says he won't accept a whore for a daughter, that to him a whore, an actress, and a model are all the same thing.

— And does that discourage you?

— No, it just makes me hate him even more. So sad that he's a drunk…

My mother tries everything to get him out of this life. I don't try anymore — to me, he doesn't even exist. I try to pretend he doesn't exist to see if he'll disappear. My dream is that my mother divorces him; I tell her this all the time, but Mom never listens to me! She tells me that God will heal him one day. God… Mom talks about God all the time! I don't know what God has been doing for us all this time! Many times we don't even have anything to eat. I study at a very poor school and I'm the poorest child there. Did you know that I only have one pair of pants and one shirt to go to school?

— Yes, I know, I go to school with you every day.

— Well then! The other children make so much fun of me because of that! Doesn't she know? Doesn't Mom know that I suffer because of this? So why doesn't she work? If she loves me as much as she says she does, she should work to give me a better life, a less painful one. I'm so ashamed… Tomorrow morning will come and I'll have to wear that same old pair of pants again, which was already old when someone gave it to us! It belonged to my sister for a few years, then it came to me, and it's already been with me for two years. I have to wear it to the theater, to the market, to school… And when someone from school runs into me on the street, it's a huge joke, because I'm still wearing the same pants.

And the shirt… the shirt cost 7 reais, and my mother makes me wear it for two years! It's torn, you know? It's worn thin near the belly… How embarrassing… All I want is to work, to work a lot! And to become very rich, and be able to buy all the clothes I want. That's what I want to be when I grow up: rich! It doesn't matter what I do for work — I'll be very rich and I'll help poor people like me. I'll buy all the food in the world for my mother; I'll buy her a house too, so she can get rid of my father. And I'll help a lot of people!

The next day, when the girl woke up to go to school, at six in the morning, she saw her father in the living room.

As usual, she walked right past him, as if becoming invisible, went into the kitchen, felt the bag of stale bread, and realized it was empty. Outraged, exhausted, and fed up with poverty — and perhaps even a little spoiled, because that morning it truly would have done her good to have some bread there — she shouted:

— Where's the bread that was here?

— The bread had been there for days, it got moldy and I had to throw it away this morning — someone shouted from somewhere in the house.

— And does anyone have 10 cents to buy me a piece of bread?… — silence. — Please?

The girl knew how much her father spent on alcohol every month — yes, when she passed by the bars near the house, the owners would come out from behind the drunks shouting at her, telling her that her father had to pay his bar tab, which, according to them, reached up to 3,000 reais per month.

— I don't have any money; the one who has money here at home is your father, ask him! Why don't you ask him?

The girl stood up, furious, and walked through the kitchen, where, already at six in the morning, her father was pouring himself a glass of cachaça.

— Are you already going to turn into that devil you always turn into? I already told you I don't want bottles of cachaça in this house! Where had you hidden this? — her mother yelled.

That was it — the day had begun. The father, as always, started his insults against the mother and against everything else he saw in front of him, and the girl, once again mortified with shame, hurried out, as if fleeing from her own destiny. She even forgot about the bread, the hunger, everything. *"If only I didn't have bread, if only I had hunger, but didn't have those two, my life would be happy,"* she thought.

At school, she spent the entire morning without eating. She didn't like eating the school food; it disgusted her — she
thought they didn't clean the plates properly. She waited until she got home, where there was *"always the same food — rice, beans, and meat; and when there was no meat, it was eggs, and sometimes it was just rice and beans."*

And sometimes many days went by without bread, the girl's favorite food.

The mother asked the older sister to buy bread, since she worked at a very good company and was the only one who actually earned money in the household. *'Buy some bread for your sister, please, the poor thing loves bread, and we haven't had bread at home for weeks — it's almost been a month,'* to which the sister replied: *'I won't. I'm not going to support a drunk's household, and besides, the child is yours. If you want to give her bread, leave the house and go work — you have legs and arms to work with… If you really cared about her, you'd get a job! If you want one, I already told you, I can get you a job where I work! But I won't buy anything or help with anything.'*

When the girl heard that exchange, she went to cry under the bed. She was sad because her sister didn't want to buy her bread, but she was even sadder because her sister spoke to their mother that way and made her cry. The mother felt defeated in life — and she was — but she didn't like people saying she didn't work or that the father was a drunk, even though he had been that way long before the girls were born — not even the sister had ever seen him sober.

But no one could tell the mother that he was a drunk, because she took offense, and if it was one of the daughters, then… She demanded respect: *'He is your father, no matter what he is — show respect!'*

While in the kitchen the mother argued with the sister — who had said only one sentence and then fallen silent to listen to three hours of lecturing — the girl, under the bed, thought:

'Respect… respect… I don't have a father! He is a drunk and I hate him! Sometimes I think that only when he dies will we have peace! He doesn't deserve anything good that comes from us.'

She came out from under the bed amid the shouting, making sure no one saw her leave her hiding place, and tried to sleep.

That night, she had a horrible dream in which she killed her father, and right after the dream she fell into a white room where the Voice began to speak to her:

— Don't be afraid; it was not on the earthly plane that you killed him… On Earth, he is still asleep.

— Huh? Who are you?

— He is asleep. Asleep in many senses… He came to Earth and forgot his purpose, forgot how one was meant to live here. He made all the wrong decisions, chose all the wrong paths… He is very unhappy. You don't need to harm him in any way — he already harms himself greatly, far more than he even realizes.

— I don't care about him, I just want him to die, so maybe we could be happy! — said the girl, pretending coldness, as if she were not feeling extremely shaken and nervous by the dream; her entire body was trembling, and she thanked God that it had not been 'real.'

— Truth is subjective, said the Voice. Just because he didn't die on Earth doesn't mean he didn't die somewhere else. Certainly, within you he died — you killed him — and that is no less a death, and a very real one. But in matter, on Earth, he will not die now, nor anytime soon… His life path, for now 'in the planes,' is long, so you will have to find another way to be happy.

— But he drinks so much! At school they tell us that people who drink like that die quickly. There are so many diseases —he can't live that long! His liver is always acting up!

— It is not disease that kills. Death happens when one's time of stay on Earth comes to an end; illness is only an excuse for departure, for the spirit to return home. Time on Earth is determined even before a human being is born into it, and each person's mission on Earth varies greatly.

However, human beings have free will. In rare cases, they can even change their designated time on Earth, but this has to do with the timing of their missions — the result of important life decisions that profoundly influence earthly life. It has nothing to do with physical health itself.

But health is very important for maintaining mental balance and for carrying out the many physical tasks that a human being must perform to fulfill their mission. Even so, the health of the body also comes from the mind.

Pain and illness, in truth, do not exist; they are defense mechanisms created by human beings themselves, like signs along the road meant to make them stop when necessary and move forward when allowed. Pain helps one choose one path or another when the mind has placed itself in an unhealthy environment, of very low vibrations, and has been unable to make the 'right,' appropriate decision. Physical pain and illness are creations of earthly consciousness, and, contrary to what humans believe, healing does not depend on prayers, but on changing one's own behaviors and habits.

Therefore, illnesses and pains come to help; they are like a kind of guide, and by no means do they come as punishment or any kind of penance, nor do they come by chance.

— Free will… I've heard about that at school, said the girl, as if she had only listened to half of what the Voice had said. — What does that mean, exactly?

— That the human being chooses absolutely everything that they do and experience. Some come with a greater understanding of the whole, and therefore with the mission of changing the environment in which they live; others come with the mission of growing, of evolving; and there are also those who are linked in life to someone else, who have the mission of fulfilling something in relation to a specific other spirit — and that is one of the most difficult lives. It is not at all easy to fulfill missions with specific spirits here…

Human beings have extreme difficulty listening; they pray asking God to send them a sign, a message, relief, without knowing — without even imagining — that the other human being right in front of them, with whom they sometimes live every day, is exactly a messenger sent by God to them; that is a sign, a message, and a lesson, used by God Himself, who speaks through that person.

— So does that mean that anyone in my family, or on my street, could be a 'sign' from God to me?

I mean, could they have come precisely to make me learn something I haven't learned yet? So a person can themselves be the very sign and the answer that I ask for every night?

— Exactly. What you call God does not materialize as a bearded man with a deep voice like the ones you see in films. God materializes as energy; in humans; in voices inside human minds; in situations during the day; in dreams at night… God manifests through nature; through animals… Everything that exists is a fragment of God, and everything, without exception, works in His favor. Even when it causes suffering to human beings, everything that belongs to and recurs on Earth happens for their growth.

After all, human beings have total choice over what happens to them, and the rest is simply the consequence of what they do and vibrate (that is, what they think and feel).

— So are you God? You're so intelligent!… You talk about things so different, things I've never thought about before… You can only be God!

— I have no name. Where I am, there is no ego, therefore there is no name. I will be whatever you think I am. It has never been my nature to impose anything. Imposition of any kind goes against my essence. If one day you wish to equate me to something you know while on Earth, equate me to freedom, then — to freedom in its fullest form — for within it lies the understanding of my essence and the beginning of the path that leads to salvation (to deep knowledge of Being, and of the reasons behind one's actions).

— You speak strangely… but it's strange because I understand everything you say. It's as if we've had this conversation before, the same conversation… Your words sound so familiar to me, yet at the same time I'm sure I've never heard them before!

— You are a very old soul, said the Voice, in a playful tone. I know you very well… I have had this same conversation with you many times, not only in this life, but in many other lives as well, and you have had many forms.

In your past life, for example, you were a man.

— A man?!

— And in this life now you have the same rebelliousness he had… You have carried this rebelliousness through many lives.

— Yes! But of course I'm rebellious! Do you see the life I have to put up with?! Who would endure this life in any other way?

— Know that who you are depends only on you; it has nothing to do with your environment or with your father. Who knows if he didn't also come to teach you something? It is necessary to listen more and pay more attention to the signs. This is not your first life with him, and in the other life everything was very different, as it always is. Very different situations, but your personality was quite similar, even though you were not a girl, even though he was not your father… So it is not really the situation that must change, but the behavior of both of you, and that can only happen through living.

— I don't know what you're talking about…

— Oh, now you've started lying? Did you forget that I am a voice inside your head? And that because of that I know everything you think? I know when you lie too! Both of us know that you know exactly what I'm talking about! I know what you're going through isn't easy, but this isn't a matter of feeling sorry for yourself or waiting for the world to see your situation and pity you. It's a matter of behavior. Attitudes are what dictate the life humans have on Earth — in truth, it isn't all that complicated, but they turn it into an almost impossible task.

— I just want to disappear from here, like my mother says every day: "I want to disappear!"

— And disappear to where? When you say you want to disappear, where do you think you will go when you "disappear"?

Wherever she goes, the situation will go with her; therefore, there is no way to “disappear.” Even if you disappear from Earth, your essence, your spirit, will never disappear from the Whole. So if you disappear from here, the same issues that need to be resolved will appear there—wherever “there” may be.

— So how do I disappear, or how do I make my father disappear? — asked the girl, as if she had not heard what the Voice had just said.

— I’m sorry, but not even in dreams can you now live a reality different from the situation you have with your father. For reality to happen here in the world of dreams and in any other world, you first have to imagine it, to make it real at least inside your own mind. You are the one who creates it. Or what do you think thoughts are for? Ideas? Imagination? They are not there merely so that humans can distract themselves on a boring afternoon by daydreaming; thoughts and imagination exist to create the present itself, the future itself. They are not something abstract; they are more like cake batter, with the cake being life itself.

And in your case, at this moment, you are so hurt and so obsessed with the idea of making your father disappear that you actually make him exist even more. By imagining so intensely that he vanishes, you recreate his existence thousands of times, because your mind does not understand that you do not want him near you; it only recreates what you think about most strongly. And in your thoughts he is always wrong, always committing serious offenses against you, and that does not help either—it does not attract any change in his behavior. And more and more, your hatred makes him even more alive in your life. He is now present in all of your worlds, and in all of them you feel blind hatred, turning reality in all of them into pure hatred, pain, and resentment.

That is why you killed him here. You try desperately to rid yourself of him within yourself, but not through the path of learning—rather through the only path you know in the world, the crude path of the death of the body.

And that will not make him disappear — you should already know that. You have already killed him before in other lives, and here he is again with you. Taking the “easier” path only makes the struggle between the two spirits grow longer, and with each life it becomes more complicated.

— And what if I had a boyfriend? I could have a boyfriend, like my sister, and then she hardly ever gets stressed about the family… When I was born she cried a lot and was very unhappy, like me, but when she got her first boyfriend, she got better! She spends most of her time at his house, with his family… And they are always so nice! Sometimes I wish I had been born into his family… My sister has always had the best people in the world as boyfriends! Why don’t I have that luck? I’m already 9 years old and I’ve never liked anyone! Will I die without love? Please, if you really are God, don’t let me die without love!

— For a human, you are still very young, believe me, boyfriends will come! — said the Voice, in a playful tone. — Many, many of them.

— But I want one now! Right now! My life is horrible! Just because I’m a child, do I only have the right to suffer? I hate being a child! Being a child is the worst thing in the world! I can’t wait to grow up! Just because I’m too young, I don’t have the right to be saved by a boyfriend, like my sister was? That doesn’t sound fair to me and it makes no sense at all!

— The role of a boyfriend is not exactly to save people from their internal miseries… But your thinking is free! I’ve already told you, don’t shout at me demanding your boyfriend! It is you yourself who creates him… You said you don’t like anyone, didn’t you? That’s not my fault!

— Actually, there is someone I like — it just came to my mind now…

— The actor? He seems like a decent guy to me, but I think he already has a girlfriend.

— But the thought is mine, and in my thoughts he doesn't! Now he is my boyfriend! Who would have thought it! For someone who had no boyfriend at all and thought she would die without love, not bad at all — now I'm dating Maurício Mattar! Angélica is a nice person too, I hope she understands that I don't intend to hurt her, but Maurício loves me now… And she is beautiful, she will be able to find someone else easily! For me, that would be difficult.

Then the actor appears and the two of them play ball for hours, perhaps years, in her dream, since in the world of dreams time does not exist as it does here on Earth.

When she woke up, the girl felt better, she was happy, and she told her mother in the kitchen that she had dreamed that Maurício Mattar was her boyfriend, to which her mother replied, "Are you crazy, girl!? He's dating Angélica, I think they're going to get married and everything, and he's much too old to be your boyfriend! He's already a man, you're just a child!" But she didn't care about her mother's bad mood that morning; nor did her mother's lack of acceptance of her relationship matter much. Maurício's age made no difference at all — what mattered was that she loved him, that he was a decent man, and that he would now save her from her miserable and lonely life as a thin, unpopular child. After all, isn't that what boyfriends are for?

She then decided that Maurício was doing his job as a boyfriend, considered him worthy of her love, and continued playing ball and talking with him throughout the entire day. It all seemed coherent to her, and besides, it felt so real and did her so much good that there was no reason not to live that beautiful and simple union: all it took was imagining it and, *plim!*, there was Maurício, ready to be part of any adventure.

CHAPTER 3

The first understanding of society

Once again Kat had returned to the state of Rio, to a city in the countryside, a place where she had lived for most of her life. But now, at ten years old, she felt devastated; she had spent the least bad months of her life in Belo Horizonte, thinking that her life was finally going to move forward.

In Minas, the semi-detached house where she lived stood in front of a park, where there was a small forest full of trees that reminded Kat of the favorite places of her life: the dearly missed forest in Belém, where she had been born. That park had now become her favorite place. She did not know how her father had managed to live in a place that, for their reality of life, was so good and so different from the places she was used to living in.

It was there, in Minas, that Kat had her first friend, a neighbor with whom she spent every possible hour of the day. At school, people treated her with respect, and, as always, she was the top student in her class—not because she was studious, but because *"my mother will kill me if I don't get a 10."* Getting a 9 instead of a 10 at the end of the term, or on a test, was the only thing that made Kat cry.

By that point she no longer cried; she had lost her child's heart, thought of herself as a kind of robot that felt nothing, and had also forgotten about her boyfriend Maurício… There was no more time for him in Minas. There she played ball with neighborhood children who went to the park and with her inseparable friend, with whom she spent the best hours of her life playing jump rope and making ice cream with Eliana's toy ice cream machine.

Of course, at her house in Minas the situation was still the same… they still had no furniture, and, as had happened at the other addresses, the electricity was cut off every month — and she had to get straight 10s studying by candlelight. And when there was no money to buy candles, she had to do her homework before five o'clock, when it got dark, which was almost impossible with so many assignments.

At the school she attended and in the neighborhood where she lived, she was still the poorest girl, still the one who had only one outfit, the one who never had money to buy schoolbooks or even make photocopies of the pages and had to copy everything by hand. But the children seemed less cruel and did not make jokes about her poverty — there were still jokes about her thinness and her accent, which sounded like someone from Rio, but our girl quickly learned to speak "mineirês" in order to blend in, and saw that this way she was better accepted by her little friends.

Life there was still difficult, but it was much better; she thought it would have been perfect if it were not for being left alone so many times by her mother, who traveled with her father — he went to the countryside for work — and stayed away for weeks, months, leaving her alone with her faithful companion Dengoso. She took care of Dengoso, whom she called her older brother, and took great care of the house, trying to make her mother proud: "If I do everything to make her happy, maybe then she will love me and stay instead of leaving," she thought.

The girl acted tough: when her mother called asking if she was okay, she said she was great, swallowed her tears, and never said that her heart was in pieces, nor that she felt very lonely and very afraid of sleeping alone in that house.

Despite being very brave, our girl was still only nine years old, and the idea that there might be "ghosts" on the lower floor of the house still bothered her. But her older brother was there to protect her from bad spirits — she believed that if Dengoso was there, at the foot of the bed, nothing would happen to her. That was why the poor cat was locked in the bedroom with her all night long, which made him complain and meow desperately, wanting his feline freedom, but it made her calmer, because she would wake up startled by the slightest noise and think, *"Phew, thank goodness, it's just Dengoso."* Sometimes exhaustion spoke louder than fear, and she managed to fall back asleep.

Now, however, everything had changed. After almost a year living in that place — where, if not for the inconvenience caused by the presence and absence of her parents, everything would have been perfect — her family was evicted from the house in Minas as well. The girl discovered that her father had never paid the rent, and her mother, filled with anger and fighting a lot with the father, came home one day and started packing everything into boxes again. The girl, not understanding anything, begged them to stay; she thought it was just another fight in which her father would leave the house and the next day everything would be the same, but not this time. Her mother really was leaving, and the girl, desperate, begged and pleaded, but there was no way around it. They no longer had a single cent; the electricity was about to be cut off again; her father had lost his job for the same reason as always — he had been caught drinking on the job many times — and her mother was overtaken by despair and once again boxed everything up.

This time, however, it would be worse: they were going to live at her grandmother's house. There was no place in the world that Kat hated more than her grandmother's house. It was very far from everything — it took a long time on the bus to get anywhere; it was in a favela, even poorer, with children who were even more cruel. *"There, even the adults were cruel,"* the girl would say, referring to the nicknames and the malicious teasing she suffered from the adults on her grandmother's street.

“The children there are animals! They hate me! They hit me, they insult me! How am I supposed to live there?” And that wasn’t all. The house was tiny, the walls were full of mold — her grandmother couldn’t manage to clean the house, since she worked all day as a seamstress and could barely pay the bills. She also asked Kat for many favors, and by that point Kat already hated doing anything for any human being; she had limited herself solely to talking to, loving, and caring for animals. Her mother was the exception — as much as she resented her, she tried to “educate” her, guide her, as if she understood life, as if she were a teacher. The mother would tell the girl that she was more mother than daughter, because she wanted to teach her about life, and in fact she had taught her many things; “no one knows how or where this wisdom comes from,” the mother would say, always astonished by her daughter’s intelligence, which could not have come from such little experience in this world. Even so, despite knowing this, the mother did not give much importance to her words.

However, although she did not like her criticisms, she greatly admired her poetry, which had already earned her much recognition — mentions in newspapers, medals, prizes, and even gifts — a kind of fame that the extremely shy girl did not accept. It was her mother, in collusion with some of her teachers, who took her schoolwork without her permission and sent it to newspapers and writing and poetry contests in the city.

And now, whether she liked it or not, there she was in the tiny house, sleeping in the same bed as her grandmother, with whom she had no bond at all, since she had only met her a few years earlier, having lived in another state; and now they slept together in the same bed. Her grandmother’s sewing room was now also her sister’s bedroom, her parents slept crammed together on a thin mattress on the living room floor, and the entire house looked more like a labyrinth of boxes and piles of endless clutter, creating an even more welcoming home for the cockroaches, which, to Kat’s despair, were everywhere and in great numbers, as if the house belonged to them.

There were also many bugs in the bathroom, whose floor was cold and red, and whose broken tile walls, exposed bricks, and mold everywhere turned that place into what the girl hated most. Her health had also weakened because of the mold that covered the walls of the entire shack (or at least that was how she understood it), and the girl, who had always been allergic, now had to take medicine and do inhalation treatments every day.

And now it wasn't only her parents shouting, it was also her grandmother, who, upon seeing the father drink and turn everyone's life into hell, lost her temper and screamed in rage. Hell had been set up, and now the girl had returned to the very same school she had once thanked God for leaving, thinking she would never go back, and those same children, after a year, had only grown worse. "Some people still wonder whether hell exists; I live in one," she thought every morning.

But soon her parents grew tired of having yet another adult in the house telling them how unbearable they were together. Poor grandmother, who could not endure seeing and living through all that madness of fights, comings and goings, neighborhood shame, and shouting twenty hours a day, soon told them to look for another place to live, and a little less than a year later, off they went again. The whole family once more, with all the boxes—which had not even been opened since the move from Minas—now also full of mold from the dampness of the grandmother's house and full of cockroaches, which had laid thousands of eggs there and made them their home.

At least she would no longer have to fight poisonous centipedes on the bathroom floor every day, Kat thought. But the news of moving house always came like a nightmare, a trauma for the girl, because soon it would be like in all the other places: the fights, the shame, the electricity cut off, the unpaid rent, and after three months they would be evicted again and would have to take shelter somewhere else.

"We don't live, we merely survive; this is not life. I see other people, they smile sometimes, they are happy and they love their families."

“I never felt any of that,” Kat would say in her long conversations with herself. The girl, who by this point in her life story was already a shattered human being, unhappy, suffering from deep depression, no longer even attempted a simple smile, and was criticized by her family, who called her strange, crazy, depressive. Sometimes her mother would ask, irritated, why she was so unhappy and tell her to stop being so weird. By then even her hiding place had been discovered, which caused even more discomfort and bizarre conversations between her mother and sister, who was convinced that the little girl was truly crazy, “and getting worse every day,” her sister would say.

“Crazy, me? They call me crazy, but they are the crazy ones! Are they all blind? Can’t they see? I am unhappy because of them! I have no love, and a human being cannot live well without love; I have no friends, they took away my only friends… My life is over, it’s done… My hopes are gone, but at least I was happy for one year. I was happy, I had at least one friend, I played shuttlecock at least once in the park, I felt at least once that life would work out. I think that was everything for me… That was the maximum amount of happiness assigned to me, and I am grateful, but now it’s over. I want to leave this place! I live in an asylum! They are not normal, and they are making my own intelligence collapse. Everyone around me is crazy! The whole world is crazy! Take me away, God, please, take me away from here! I can’t take it anymore among these lunatics. They will never learn anything! They will never understand anything! I give up on them, and I give up on all other humans on Earth. Let them all blow themselves up! And there’s more: I won’t endure one more day of abuse at that school, and I won’t endure one more day of abuse in this house! I won’t accept it anymore, I’ll have to do something! I’ll leave here, I’ll quit school and find a way to work! I’ll make money and leave this house, leaving all these lunatics here to kill each other fighting and insulting one another.”

The little girl had so much anger and despair that she didn't know what she hated most in life - whether it was her father coming home drunk every day and taking out all his frustrations and rage on her, whether it was her mother, who saw this happen and did nothing, whether it was her sister, who now bought her own food and kept it in a separate part of the cupboard - candies and cookies that the little girl could never touch - and always made a scene accusing the girl of having eaten something, which is why she ended up getting a huge scolding from her mother every time, without ever having touched anything. With her 10-year-old brain, she thought that was immense selfishness and meanness, since she shared everything she had. She made little beaded bracelets to sell along with her mother, each one for 1 real, and the necklaces for 3, and with that money she bought bread, when she could. And her sister ate the bread, everyone ate the bread, so why then would it be fair that her sister didn't share hers?

"I will never understand the world. Never!"

Even being still so young, she was already certain that she had been born different... A deep certainty that, no matter where she had come from, she didn't belong to that place. More and more she looked around and felt like an extraterrestrial; every time she stopped near a human and they said something absurd to her, she felt even more ashamed of her own race. "I wish I had been born a cat," she said disappointed, looking at Dengoso, who was her only idol. She still thought sometimes about the idea of having a boyfriend, but listened frightened to her mother saying that "in this house you're only allowed to kiss on the mouth after 15 years old, and have sex only after getting married, just like it was with me."

It wasn't exactly respect that the girl had for her mother, she was afraid and felt very sorry for her; she saw her mother as a weak figure, "it wasn't just having sex that you did after you got married, it was giving up on life too!" she said quietly in her long conversations with

herself, articulated with the skill of someone narrating an important film watched by a packed auditorium.

She looked at her mother and thought, “I will be everything in this life except like her.” She saw her mother as a bizarre figure who liked to suffer, and who did not suffer alone, since she also caused great pain to her daughters, who had no choice but to witness that spectacle of horror and torture that was life aboard that troubled family. She thought with anger, “How will I ever be able to date someone if I don’t like men?” She wrote about this in her diary:

“I have noticed that women are humiliated by men; humans believe that women were made to please men. My father says that women were born only for that, to clean the house and cook, having some value to men. I learned how to cook; I am already making birthday cakes, pizza, coxinhas, and pasta. I made some cookies too, and the other day I managed to sell one of my cakes for 25 reais; I gave the money to my mother, who seemed happy, I think… She didn’t smile, but I think she was happy, after all, money is what brings happiness to people. My mother says that she is unhappy and that we only hate our father because he has no money, that if he were rich we would respect him and we would be a happy family. That is why I want to have a lot of money one day, so that I can be happy. But I don’t want to have children, God forbid! Far from me! And I also don’t want to get married; I think that when I manage to get out of this hell I will live alone. I don’t know if I will be able to have a boyfriend; my father says that women really do have to put up with all offenses and humiliations in silence, because they are stupid and inferior beings. He says that ‘women deserve to get fucked anyway,’ other times he says ‘women should die, the world would be so much better without you complaining all the time.’ He calls me, my mother, and my sister pieces of shit, and says that the day he really decides to leave and never come back, we will all die of hunger. And I think he’s right, because when he doesn’t give money at home we end up without food — and even without a house, as has already happened a few times.”

He said that we should kneel on the floor and thank God every day for having him in our lives, but at the same time he says he is an atheist and that God does not exist, and he mocks my mother for being Catholic…"

"Even thinking that we would starve and go insane with our stupid minds without a man around, I think I would rather starve than have him near me, and try my luck at living without a man one day. I don't know if I could stand having someone shout at me like that every day. Even if women don't deserve to be happy and are a bunch of pieces of shit, as my father says, I think I'd rather be alone. I don't like the shouting of his deep male voice; it gives me chills… and an immense headache, and it also makes me very nervous."

After all the years living the same situation, and after a long month of even more misfortune, the girl thought she had found a solution to her problems. So, when she went to sleep, she spoke about her idea with the Voice.

— I know how I'm going to leave this place, I'm going to kill myself! — she said with the naturalness of someone saying they're going to the corner and will be right back.

— But you can't do that. You're not allowed to.

— But you said we have free will and that we choose everything we go through, and I choose to die. I'll leave and start a new life in another life!

— No, that's not how it works. There are some laws. You can't simply kill yourself and go on to a happy next life without problems… There is also something called destiny, or a path, that all human beings have to follow. It's almost as if it were the outline of a script.

— So there is a script? If we follow a script, then what kind of free will is that?

— You are not obligated to follow it. There is, yes, a mission, and therefore a more or less outlined path assigned to each person, to help them see it and fulfill it. This path can also be changed by the human being; what happens is that if the path is changed too much, to the point of interfering with the fulfillment of the mission, it can lead the human to confusion and personal unhappiness, because they will not feel whole. And every time a human chooses a path that is very "wrong," very opposed to the one that leads to better final outcomes on the Map of the Great Plan, what they call "angels" come from "heaven" to show them the right path. There are many types of "angels," of the most varied kinds and with the most varied missions, but the primary mission of every angel is to try to make the human follow their path, the one that was assigned to them, in the best possible way. There are human beings on Earth who also do the work of angels — these, for various reasons, chose to dedicate this life, or a large part of it, to helping other humans find themselves, to manage to endure and even understand life's trials, so that they may once again "open their eyes" and awaken to the truth of life, leading them back to their paths so that there they may find peace of mind, which in the end is what everyone seeks. But even these humans have, as their first task, saving and evolving their own spirit through this act of charity.

— The truth of life? And what is that truth?

— In your life, one could say that there is also a materialized angel… It is your cat Dengoso. Many times he was the only reason for your joy and—

— Dengoso! — the Voice is interrupted by the euphoric girl. — I always knew it! I've had many cats, but Dengoso was always different!

— Yes, animals were placed in the world with the mission of making human beings feel less alone, especially those who do not get along well with other humans, those who come to Earth and feel that they do not belong to the species, who do not adapt in any way…

Sometimes this happens, and it has been happening more and more. Animals were created with the function of teaching human beings lessons about life and how to live in a harmonious way with less pain. They are born already knowing what humans take many lifetimes to learn. Humans think animals have inferior intelligence simply because they do not speak their language… They do not speak the human language and do not behave in the same way because they are not terrestrial; they are from another planet, and they did not need to change their forms to come here. Their species does not have a soul like the human one; their soul is free of karma, because they do not act with the intention of causing harm, they do not have that kind of consciousness. Unlike humans, they simply listen to and follow orders from "higher" spirits; everything they do that is relevant to a human, or on Earth, is done by order of a greater spirit. Animals are instruments of God, used whenever necessary — even when they kill or bite someone, everything they do and everything they are carries a lesson behind it, and sometimes it is a sign for the humans around them. They are silent beings, who were not taught to speak like humans, but they speak the same language of the eyes, and sometimes it is possible to see their angelic energy when one looks deeply into their eyes with an open heart.

Sometimes, because of the importance a human being gives to an animal, that animal becomes more special, and therefore receives more serious and more special missions than others, as is the case with Dengoso. It is not that he was born designated to you as your guardian angel; he was born a cat, a serving spirit from another planet who did not speak the language of humans, and one day he was adopted by your mother. But you gave him so much importance that we promoted him to a materialized guardian of your life. And today Dengoso is of the utmost importance to you and to us!

Many times it is only him that you listen to. We try to speak to you, but you do not listen… We try to teach you lessons through other human beings, but you do not see; you have grown accustomed to not liking humans, and because of that you create great pain for yourself, because you only see the worst each time you meet someone — and for that reason humans, in turn, always give you only the worst of themselves. They tend to reflect the energy they feel from each person — very different from animals, who are capable of giving love even in the presence of pure hatred. Human beings in general are a mirror of what they see and of the environment in which they live; that is why you continue to receive hatred and people continue to do horrible things to you that feel unjust, but it is not quite like that. We do not receive exactly what we deserve, because Earth is not a planet of merit; it is a planet governed by energy — and the energy that is sent out is the energy that is received.

It is as if it were a board game; on each planet where one reincarnates there is a way to achieve the objective. There are also planets where only the Law of Karma applies, which is why some spiritual masters came to Earth and taught the Law of Karma as the law of salvation. They were not wrong; they were simply referring to the wrong planet, because their spirits still carried memories and experiences from other planets they had visited in other lives. That is why there are so many religions on Earth and each one preaches something different, and none of them is wrong; all of them bring teachings of what we call “wisdom beyond Earth,” and all of them are based on what on Earth is called love, which is the only law common to all religions and to the entire Universe.

But human beings have still not understood the meaning of true love… The teachings of religions were lost over the millennia, turning great lessons of love and unity into wars and deaths across the entire planet. Human beings still do not know the true meaning of love… Few who have walked the Earth knew it, and that is why we are here, and that is also why you came, and why all the others like you came.

Earth had fallen out of control; all human beings seemed to be taking many wrong paths and making wrong decisions, and those who tried to follow the correct path, guided by the only universal instinct shared by all beings — love — were influenced by society, by the consciousness of humanity which, as soon as one arrives on Earth, is immense and dense. As I have already said, Earth is a planet governed by energy and by the laws of energy; therefore, when many humans think and act in the same way, this generates an energy that little by little turns into habit, and then, when you realize it, you are already doing things without knowing why, things you never thought you would be capable of doing. That is what happens when a human kills, rapes, injures… They are being overtaken by the energy of influence, according to which a being must have power, money, and possessions above all else in order to achieve their objective on Earth, and that their success as a human depends on this, even though it is completely the opposite. These are also memories from other planets, but in this case from inferior planets where they lived before.

Even so, Earth is a planet of trials, through which, in this existence, the aim is to refine the spirit rather than worsen it, as had been happening over the last millennia. So we decided to send more and more spirits like you to Earth — spirits who, because they have souls with more experience in choosing the right path in other existences, and because they have already passed through this and other planets many times, are less susceptible to Earth's influencing energies, since they remain more in contact with us. They are spirits who understand and feel the Voice as something alive, and who know that the entire Universe, in a certain way, lives within each being.

But that does not mean that some of you do not also get lost; adaptation to Earth does not happen for spirits like these. That is why they feel so different and end up not adapting, because they truly are not from here; in truth, they do not belong to this place…

Like animals, who came from another planet and are not here to adapt, but rather to change the earthly environment and consciousness, to teach things of higher vibration and not allow themselves to be changed by what they learn here. These spirits do not find much support on Earth; however, like all the others, they have our full support, and for some of them that is enough.

— And is that why you speak to me?

— No, that is not why. I speak to all humans, just as I speak to you. Every night I meet them and explain life, trying to calm them and help them understand that no problem they may encounter on Earth is as serious as the human brain makes it seem. That for everything that happens in their lives there is a perfectly logical explanation and a special reason. But most of the time humans do not listen. Unlike the other species placed on Earth, they were made owners of their own desires and longings, owners of their own wills and instincts, and they ended up becoming too arrogant… and now they no longer listen even to the Voice.

— So I am special, more important than the others, because I listen to you?

— In truth, no. All souls, before being human, were created equally; they have the same importance, they are all special. And you, just like all the others who, even in the human condition, only allow me to speak when they are asleep — which is when their spirit fully frees itself from Earth's restraints — you chose to be more open to the signs, even though when you wake up you forget our conversation. Just as Dengoso, who, because he became so important to you, ended up receiving a greater mission and responsibility, which was to guard your life, you gave us more attention and more importance. It is as if your spirit had opened itself to this mission of changing the world; it was not only we who chose it for you…

You chose it for yourself, and the proof of that is that, even after all these years, you have remained outside the planet's influencing energy. You managed to remain what they here call "strange," because to them your energy is different. So being different here is simply the energy of a spirit that chose to serve and to listen more than others. It has nothing to do with the soul itself; it was a matter of choice, not a change in the structure of the soul. And even if to you it seemed like an unconscious act, it was not; it was a deeply considered act of your spirit, which, in order to compensate for certain shortcomings committed in the past due to immaturity of the soul, now came and volunteered for this service. That is why it now seems that your mission is greater, but in truth all human beings come with this same "basic task," which is to save one another through love, and thus save themselves.

— But then why is my life so miserable? And why am I giving up? If I am such a good spirit with such a courageous mission, why do I feel so weak? And why was I assigned such a difficult life? And such a difficult family?

— That is precisely the point. If you set out to heal the pain of the world, there is no way to do it without feeling it. How can you be capable of saving others if you do not feel, in your human skin, what they go through? The anger, the hatred born of social exclusion, the lack of love… How can you heal the pain of the world without feeling it? Your life as it is, and with people as they are, was given to you in this way to serve your purpose, your spirit, and the mission you yourself chose for this existence. You could have been given the life of a queen, been born with many possessions, without any financial or family problems; there are humans who are born like that and are capable of fulfilling a mission similar to yours, but they come with other trials, such as illnesses and other kinds of obstacles. They are born assigned to other forms of pain, and that reality serves their spirit.

Each spirit has a specific way of responding to and evolving through life's trials, and yours needed to be born very poor, as you were, and into the family you were born into, with the difficulties you were given, in order to evolve. In truth, you already know all of this, but we are having this conversation once again because on Earth you are thinking about killing yourself. This is a very common thought among spirits who come to Earth like you. Because they do not fit in, one day they decide that they are wrong here and that their existence has no more value.

Those who end up committing suicide unfortunately face a terrible destiny, because in doing so they inflict upon themselves the only unanimous law of the entire Universe, which is the total absence of love — in this case, love for themselves. Suicide is an act of total lack of compassion and love by the human being toward themselves, and the consequences of this act are catastrophic, because when a spirit commits suicide, it not only drastically changes the course of its own existence, but also that of many other people.

In such cases, there are people who are already designated to walk the path of that human being when they are born — their children, their life partner, their soulmates, their family. This entire structure of existence that serves the Map of the Great Plan needs that human being; they are essential in the life of everyone who will cross their path until the day of their death on Earth, and something like this changes those lives forever. If a human abruptly takes their own life through suicide, even if it is one day before the end of the time assigned to them, they suffer the consequences of that act for many, many lives, beginning immediately after they disincarnate.

They then suffer physical and emotional pain without being able to do anything to ease it; they suffer the pain of other spirits who, because of that decision, may live in sadness and have their lives changed on Earth and beyond Earth. For example, if they were meant to have children, those children will not be born, and the suicidal spirit will suffer the pain and frustration of those spirits who were preparing to come as children and now can no longer come. If they were designated to be a loving partner, helping another human being grow through coexistence, that other person will now be deeply harmed as a human being and may even live with the eternal pain of searching for a companion who will never come, because that spirit has already disincarnated.

They will also suffer the pain of the low vibrational level in which they disincarnate, due to the suffering of other spirits trapped there with one another for having committed the same or similar acts. And on top of all this, the spirit soon realizes that the decision to commit suicide was nothing more than the result of earthly immaturity, and bitterly regrets having committed such a thoughtless act, seeing how hasty and ignorant it was to waste such a precious existence on Earth. In subsequent lives, the spirit comes to understand that everything could have been

different with the change of simple actions while still human, and that if even a few things had been done differently, that act would never have been necessary.

— I don’t know… Now that you say it, it seems easy to think that I’ll come back, that I’ll listen, that I’ll see the signs… But the truth is that when I go back there, I think of nothing else but “leaving.”

That morning the girl woke up feeling empty. Unlike other days, everyone decided to go out; it was Saturday and she spent the entire day alone in the house doing nothing, as usual. *“What a boring life,”* she thought.

Despite the long conversation she had had with the Voice, she woke up as if nothing had happened. She thought about taking her own life; she thought she didn’t even have the energy for that; she thought that what made her want to disappear from there was the inertia of life, the doing nothing… but she was mistaken.

Her innocent child's mind was still unable to understand her true feelings, or perhaps it was already the pride of an adult that prevented her from admitting them — and no matter from which point of view she looked at it, or even if we could talk to her and ask why she would do such a thing, regardless of what she might answer, there was only one truth: she would do it out of abandonment, out of the world's negligence. She was feeling extreme pain, and her suffering soul could no longer endure that entire reality of terror she had created for herself.

I am not saying that the girl had no reasons, or that she was spoiled, but rather that she had created this reality in which everyone hated her and everyone was against her, in which the world had woken up that morning — and every morning for the past ten years — purely and solely to hurt her.

But that Saturday afternoon her father was at the bar drinking, her mother had rushed out of the house, worried as always, with overdue bills in her purse. She had certainly gone to ask to borrow money to pay some bill; her sister was at a barbecue with her boyfriend, and Dengoso was watching the neighbor's dog through the window.

Her father drank in order to forget the fact that he had married at twenty-three a woman he did not love, merely to serve as a façade to the world, since the one he truly loved was not, in his view, a respectable woman and was not "well regarded by society." He numbed himself so he would have the courage to come home and pour out all that sadness and longing for his former beloved, without restraint. Her sister was far from there because she was trying to be happy for a while; she did not want a bothersome child following her around, stealing attention from her new dress — she had worked very hard for that dress and needed to be the center of attention at the barbecue instead of having the company of her strange ten-year-old sister, who won poetry prizes and spoke like an adult…

No, that day she truly had no patience for any of it. Her mother was once again “doing her woman’s duty,” serving the house, serving the sexist father, serving her own despair for a love that never came — in truth, she herself no longer knew what she was doing, because she was already on autopilot, had already turned into a robot in her frustration, and later would cry over her own illusion.

Kat’s mother did nothing but cry; it was as if it were a job. *“She cries at least ten hours a day,”* the girl would say when referring to her mother, *“it’s routine already.”* She and her sister no longer cared about seeing their mother cry; it had become ordinary. She cried while cooking, while eating, while showering, while cleaning the house… And when Kat asked once in a while why she was crying, she gave no answer. What I want to say is that none of them was thinking about Kat at that moment; as most of the time, they were simply living their lives. Not even Dengoso looked at her then.

Even her schoolmates, who during the week were the source of so much pain and despair for her, were now in their own homes, being mocked by their own families, beaten by their parents or older siblings. On weekends they did not wear school uniforms, they were not shameless bullies who frightened all the other students; they were just defenseless children, just like Kat.

And there she was, sitting on the bed, thinking of ending her own life because of people who, at that moment, did not even remember that she existed. She did not think of leaving a letter; she had nothing to say. The poor girl would not even leave behind a lesson in life, nor even the stories she narrated in her mind during the day. She went to her mother’s bedroom and thought, *“They must already be arriving… They were out all day, it’s already night, they must be coming back!”* But that day no one was coming back; it was already close to ten at night — if it were today, she would say that it was a sign, but because she was a child she did not say anything, though she understood it all the same.

She stood up and said:

— It's now! But wait! How will I kill myself? It's not that simple, just saying I want to die and my body instantly falls apart. How stupid I am! How didn't I think of this before? I need to think of something first… Hummm, let me think… I think the easiest way is with a knife… Wow, but it's going to hurt a lot! My God, what now? But think about it, it will be a quick pain, one that will end all these problems at once. Think about it and be brave!

She then hurried toward the kitchen, determined to find the perfect knife to get the job done, because she knew her father had many. But at that moment, Dengoso jumped in front of her, as if he wanted to say something.

— Hi, Dengoso! What do you want? I'm busy right now, I can't play, I'm sorry, I need to concentrate now.

And the cat kept weaving between the girl's legs, making her stumble, the way he did when she was eating chocolate — Dengoso was crazy about chocolate and mortadella.

— What is it? I'm not eating anything! Get out of the way!

At that moment, on the path from the bedroom to the knife, between the cat and death, she realized that she had been alone there all day, from morning until night, just as she had been for many days, many months, for many years — just her and Dengoso. And if she only had Dengoso, then Dengoso also only had her, she thought.

Stunned by this truth, she remembered Minas and the long weeks her mother had been away, when she felt guilty for spending the entire day at her friend's house, leaving Dengoso alone. She remembered that many times she stayed home alone with him, giving up being with her friends so that "he wouldn't feel lonely and abandoned, the way I feel."

She then remembered Amarelinho, another cat who had lived with them at her grandmother's house and whom her "soulless, stone-hearted" mother had placed in a shelter with the excuse that the cost of cat food was already too high.

She remembered in detail that, on that cold winter night, Amarelinho had been taken away in her uncle's old, noisy truck, trembling with fear, to be left in a shelter where there were dozens of other cats and only one old man to take care of everything. She remembered how she had suffered every day of her young life remembering that, that night, Amarelinho had peed in the car out of sheer fear and, with his eyes wide from pain and from the mother's betrayal, was being thrown away, left behind in that horrible place.

The girl lay down on the floor, hugging Dengoso, and began to cry desperately.

"No! No! Not Dengoso, please! My God, if I leave, they will throw Dengoso where they also threw the poor Amarelinho. And he was such a good little cat! He was only six months old, just a baby, and even so my mother felt no pity for the poor thing, who gave us nothing but love! And he was a much more affectionate cat than you, Dengoso! He was fluffier and more beautiful. If they were capable of doing that to him, what will they do to you, then, after I'm gone? Will they go out to pay bills and come back fifteen hours later? Will they travel saying they'll be gone for three days and stay away for three weeks? And who will feed you? Who will change your water? Who will keep you company? Who will play with you, and who will give you love and attention?"

Realizing then the betrayal she was about to commit against Dengoso, the girl understood that she was not being so different from the "soulless mother" who had abandoned Amarelinho at that place to his own fate, nor from the negligent family that had abandoned her to her own fate, as she felt, driving her to the edge of such a severe nervous breakdown that she was about to make such a cruel choice against herself. She saw that she was no different from them, because she would be doing the same to Dengoso, who, defenseless, would probably die there without love and without care.

She also understood that Dengoso, like the quiet cat who spoke, had not passed between her legs to say "play with me," but rather to beg desperately: "I know what you are about to do, and please, don't go!"

“Don’t abandon me here with the insane! You are the only sane one here, I need you!” The girl is not absolutely sure those were the exact words he said, since she still did not know how to speak cat language, but she understood the message.

And after crying for many minutes on the kitchen floor, holding Dengoso tight, and after so many vows of love, he no longer had that desperate look he had before, the look of someone about to be abandoned, as Amarelinho had been on that cold night inside the old truck. No — now he had a calm, happy look.

The girl then looked Dengoso in the eyes and swore she would never abandon him, saying that, no matter what happened, as long as he lived, she would live too, to take care of him.

“You are my responsibility! And I am not someone who runs away from my responsibilities! If I did, I would be just like them, and there is nothing in this world that I hate more.”

And that day, as someone reborn, she went to sleep truly happy. Not because anything in her life had changed — life remained the same, and Dengoso, who had already been there for six years, was still the same — but now she saw differently. She had learned so many valuable lessons that night, lessons she would only truly understand many years later. But understanding did not matter now; all that mattered was protecting Dengoso, giving him what she herself did not have, what the world had not given her. And that was how she went to sleep, feeling important, as if she now had a purpose. She felt needed; she was a mother, she was responsible for Dengoso’s life and well-being, and that was enough for her to live.

Years later she would come to understand that it was not really life that had been killing her that day, but rather her own way of seeing life — because, thinking about it carefully, it was the same unfair life that had given her misery, that had given her the terrible family, as she called it, but it was also the life that had given her Dengoso and so many other wonderful things at the same time.

So perhaps life was not so bad after all; it did not give only misfortune. Life gave everything, but the girl chose to see what she wanted — and that night, almost by a miracle of God, or of a cat used by God, she chose to see in Dengoso her reason for living. She chose to make him her purpose, and that unconscious–conscious choice, made at the very last moment and so subtly, ended up saving that life and many other existences.

That night, as she fell asleep, the girl heard the Voice:

— Life is what we make of it. If you cry now, it is because you chose that. Do not blame others when it is from yourself that you must demand change.

— So you want me to change? Everyone wants me to change. Everyone! Well, now they will see. I'm fed up! Fed up with everything! Yes, maybe you're right, maybe I really do choose my own life. And from today on I will be a different girl. A new person will wake up this morning! I am no longer afraid! Are you hearing me? I am no longer afraid! — the girl shouted into nothingness.
— And who are you, anyway? I don't see you! Come on, show yourself! I'm not afraid of anything anymore! And whatever or whoever you are, I'm not afraid of you either!

— I am an old friend of yours. And I am happy to know that you are no longer afraid of anything. Fear, of everything that exists on Earth, is the human being's worst enemy. And the greatest enemy of their evolution. Change is also not a bad idea, since everything that evolves changes; therefore, there is no evolution without change. You do not need to be so upset and angry because you see yourself needing to change. It is not other humans who instill this desire to change in you, as you think; it is your own spirit, in order to make you evolve.

CHAPTER 4

The change

As she had promised, the girl truly woke up a different being that morning. Not exactly what would be considered right, but without a doubt she had changed — and a lot.

She got up as if there were no one else in the house, ignored everyone's presence, and walked straight past the kitchen.

On the street, this time, when someone whistled at her along with a crude compliment, the ten-year-old girl — who by her size looked more like fifteen — shouted, *"Go fuck yourself, you idiot,"* with the authority and rage of a grown person. She arrived at school with the same attitude. There was anger in her eyes that day.

And almost as if by magic, as though the entire world — even the birds — could feel her energy, for the first time no one made fun of her that day. Not the teachers, not even the class clowns who at every roll call joked about her name. No one.

Like in action movies, wherever she passed the ground seemed to tremble and voices fell silent. It was as if she were blind and deaf with hatred; she no longer listened to anything, felt nothing, or thought about anything. She seemed like a dormant volcano, waiting for someone to say anything at all that displeased her so she could erupt.

It would have taken just one word, one gesture, one look. She sat alone until the end of class without speaking to anyone, and without noticing that she also had not been bothered by anyone, until… shortly before dismissal, when half the school had already left and she was crossing the long, half-kilometer courtyard, a voice called her something — she did not even properly hear the insult, she was deaf with rage. Then, from the middle of the courtyard, she recognized the voice even before turning around. It came from the benches near the trees, to her right. It was the bully, one of the cruelest, most humiliating of them all — and this one really was about fifteen years old, even though the two were almost the same size.

Kat, looking at the girls laughing alongside the bully, asked, *"What did you say? I didn't hear you."* And she repeated the insult, something ridiculous like calling her a slut, or other names whose meaning Kat did not even know — the bullies were not intelligent at all; later Kat would learn this too, that lack of intelligence leads to very mediocre places in life, and, in the case of bullies, to places very different from the status they had at school.

Then the volcano erupted. And the girl, who had literally changed overnight, catching the bullies completely off guard, ran toward the leader. She grabbed her by the collar with such force that the girl slammed into the bench, amid Kat's screams, shouting things like *"Never in your life say things like that again — if you do it again I'll smash your face!"* The others jumped back in fright and the entire courtyard began to scream.

To Kat's bad luck, in that same second someone grabbed her by the arm, and the girl, startled, saw that it was the school principal, a feared and frightening figure. She was a large woman, round in shape, and was always shouting at the students. They said she had no family, no husband, no heart — that she was a monster, that she had already killed some children and kidnapped others to serve as slaves in her house.

But, you know how it is — many rumors circulate in schools like that, so Kat did not know whether they were true. Still, just in case, she spent all those years keeping as far away as possible from Fátima's clutches, who was not only the principal but also the math teacher. *"I don't think a human being can get any worse than that,"* the girl thought.

The principal grabbed both of them by the arm, and the bully, who was already used to being "from the streets," played dumb in that moment and started crying, accusing Kat of threatening her and of having bullied her for years. Kat, on the other hand, a novice in the life of crime, still silent and deaf with rage, said nothing; she just sat there looking like a rabid animal until the time her mother was called to pick her up from school, by order of the principal.

Her mother, who despite being very absent in many things was very present when it came to severity, treated her daughters like soldiers in a barracks, so that attitude was absolutely forbidden, no matter the reason. And even if there were a reason, and even if she were right, Kat did not want to waste time explaining herself. Being right no longer mattered to her, nor having a reason, nor pleasing anyone. She thought, *"I will live like this until one day I can finally get out of this hell,"* and every day of her life, when she opened her eyes, she would say, *"One day less."* And that was how she found a way to survive, to endure her own life, for the years that followed.

Of course, that same week Kat returned to school and had problems with the bullies, who banded together — five of them — to beat her. Even so, *"it was worth it,"* she thought.

After that day when she decided to change, her life truly changed completely; now people at school respected her, and without meaning to she began to become popular, although she never cared about that, because she truly did not care about anyone.

That same month her first menstruation came, sealing with a golden key a month of pure hatred and bad temper. Everyone asked her in shock what had happened; why that sweet, quiet girl, who until very recently seemed so romantic, who wrote poetry and took care of everyone, had now become a problem child — causing scandals at school, constant fights, staying away for entire days holed up in long theater classes, and when she got home calling her father a drunk, her mother a fool, and even hitting her older sister. The sister, trying to control that creature so young yet so furious, forced physical contact in a frustrated attempt to make her be like before, to do the things she used to do, which the girl vehemently refused.

Not that she did it on purpose; she had simply decided that those people did not serve her, did not help her grow, did not say anything useful for her well-being or her growth as a person. They did and said everything for their own benefit. Using her mother's words, she defined them like this: *"They only think about their own asses."*

Hell settled into the house — now much worse than before. Much worse for them, because for the girl it was much better; she felt good, she felt big and powerful. No offense went unnoticed, she was ready to be beaten, to suffer the consequences, even to die if necessary. And with each passing day, with each insane situation she went through by placing herself in the world that way, her courage grew. And now, after breaking many laws in both worlds (spiritual and earthly), after getting herself into plenty of trouble and madness, she felt like a queen: *"Nothing can stop me now; poor anyone who crosses my path."*

CHAPTER 5

The rebel

That was how her mother now referred to her when speaking to people: “the rebel.” She still tried to respect her mother and arrive at the agreed times, almost always, but often she did not. As for her father and her sister, it was as if neither of them existed; she only addressed them to pour out the bitter venom of a scorpion. Oh yes — she was also “100% Scorpio,” as she liked to call herself. Her sister simply said she was the devil in human form, and her father, as always, said nothing. But the truth was that she was just living her life; she did not interfere in anyone else’s, it was they who stuck their noses into hers. The girl simply no longer allowed herself to be everyone’s punching bag in the house. The aunts no longer saw her either; from that year on she decided not to speak to or see anyone in the family, with the exception of her grandmother, who was the only one she did not hate. Even so, she did not feel much affinity with her either, but *“she’s old, poor thing, I have to be patient with her,”* she thought.

In her diary:

“I’ve been reading a lot about astrology, and how fascinating it is!”

It's been a few years since I started reading, and I didn't understand anything about humans; it was astrology that helped me understand many of people's inexplicable behaviors, and it's so fun! Now I can say that many things make sense. I love my sign, and, according to astrology, this behavior I have is nothing strange, it's a characteristic of my sign. But it also says there that my sign is very sexual, and I'm not yet... Actually, I am curious about sex, but I don't like anyone. How am I going to do this?... I'm also very embarrassed. I couldn't even kiss on the mouth, I'm still BV [“boca virgem”, Brazilian slang meaning never been kissed], but when the kids at school call me that I turn purple with rage! I'm going to have to find a way to do this. Choose a less horrible boy and do it with him, there's no other way! I don't want to do this, but I have no choice. Last week they locked me in a room with a boy and it was awful! I was so embarrassed I wanted to die. Even today I can't look at him!"

A few months after being taken over by her explosive behavior, the bullying at school had decreased significantly. Now she had become the target of another type of bullying. Since Kat had unintentionally, in a few months, gone from "skinny weakling," who was humiliated and beaten by everyone, to the group of big girls, and ascending to popular among the classes of similar ages, now she was obligated to kiss too. She was obligated to be big in everything! The girl had already had other relationships before; her first boyfriend was a boy seven years older, in kindergarten, she was 5 and he was 12... Soon after there was Maurício, but she had never kissed on the mouth. The shyness was still very great, that still hadn't changed at all.

But as the bullying related to this subject worsened - now the girl couldn't even walk a meter without being embarrassed, her so-called "colleagues" would throw one or two boys on top of her - she decided it was time to act.

She told herself, looking at her reflection in the bathroom mirror during recess, like someone encouraging a soldier: *"I am strong and fearless, and if I'm not afraid of God's law, nor of men's law, nor of death, imagine if I'm going to be afraid of some skinny boy from school!"* In the past month, Kat had adopted an old lace bra with padding that she had inherited from her mother. With it, she even seemed to have breasts, so she had all the boys from fifth through seventh grade willing to do the job of freeing her from the much-hated BV! Of course, she wanted the older boys from the second year; those were the ones she truly dreamed about… They were more mature, taller, sturdier, certainly more intelligent (or less stupid). But since she had no access to them, to everyone's surprise, she chose Dorivaldo.

Dorivaldo sat in the last seat. The quietest boy and the oldest in the class — he was already fourteen.

"Dorivaldo?" everyone asked in shock. *"Yes."*

"But are you crazy?! Dorivaldo is horrible! Short and big-nosed! Why don't you go for Thiago, who everyone wants to be with? You're lucky, you can choose — choose better! Dorivaldo looks like he's about eighteen… He never talks to anyone, so we don't even know his age, but he must already be eighteen!"

Kat didn't care; she felt safer with Dorivaldo. He was the only one who was polite and well-mannered. His grandmother was a Portuguese teacher and had raised him. He was a respectful boy and the only one who didn't awaken hatred in her just by being nearby. All the others were unbearable to her with their childish boy behavior.

That very day, she went up to the innocent victim — I mean, to Dorivaldo — and asked him to go upstairs with her to the empty classroom during recess.

The two of them were there alone and Kat, almost having a panic attack from nerves, told him that she saw the other unbearable students spying through the keyhole. They had a really mature conversation, which actually only took place to help the girl's nervousness pass. Then Dorivaldo told her that he would tell everyone they had kissed, that it didn't really need to happen, and that way they would leave her alone. She agreed, but said: "Okay, we won't do it here, but we'll do it after class! Don't tell anyone! After class wait for me at the train square; it's a bit far from here, but it's on the way to my house, so I'll already be close to home. You go first and I'll go half an hour later, so no one suspects anything." After all, she was no coward, and even if she lied to her classmates, inside herself she would know that she had chickened out and that would shake her Wonder Woman self-confidence. And, using all her strength in her actress talents, she pretended to Dorivaldo that everything was fine, that she wasn't dying of nerves, she had only asked him that because she saw that time had passed, the bell had rung and there would be no more time to "execute the service."

She went to the square, where Dorivaldo was already waiting for her sitting on a bench, and kissed the 14-year-old boy, an act that left her extremely embarrassed and disturbed, so much so that she never looked at his face again. The boy, who sat at the back of the same classroom, had now become invisible. But that didn't stop her from becoming stronger and more powerful; now Kat felt in charge of herself and owner of an enormous secret. She imagined if her mother and the others at home discovered that she at 10 years old had French-kissed someone - "they would kill me," she thought - and decided to keep the secret under lock and key. Lying in bed, thinking about everything, she felt her face burn with shame about Dorivaldo, but what mattered was appearing adult before her classmates at school, and that she had achieved.

CHAPTER 6

The discovery of power and disappointment

In the months that followed, Kat wanted to explore her limits. She felt like she owned the world, and now boys were her favorite target. She set her sights on the most popular and most handsome boys at school and, masterfully, made sure the information reached them that they would “have a chance” to kiss her during recess. She lied about her age, swallowed her shame, and adopted the posture of an adult, superior woman. Then came the first — Marcelo, seventeen years old — and the second, Artur, sixteen, with whom she fell hopelessly in love, which made her stop, for a while, the power games in which boys were mere objects.

She did not care about popularity; that was not really why she acted that way. After all, she did not admire any of those people and remembered well how everyone had treated her not long before. She did it for the adrenaline. She liked knowing there were no limits for her, that she was invincible, and with each experience she became stronger. Besides, she had a lot of fun; she found it interesting to see how everything had changed simply because she had changed. She thought about how people were mere idiotic puppets, susceptible to everything — all it took was knowing how to give the order properly, or manipulate in the right way, and voilà, she could get anything she wanted.

And the people for whom that rule did not apply, such as her family members, she simply ignored; she did not speak, did not feel, it was as if they did not exist. She simply deleted from her life everything that bothered her or that resisted yielding to her charms or to her orders, call it whatever you like.

Within that reality she reached the age of twelve, still with almost no friends, and now with little emotion. The depression had returned, the situation at home was going from bad to worse, and the girl continued to hate humanity, perhaps now a little more. She liked listening to rock in her dark room; the sadder the music, the more she identified with it. She had left behind the once-beloved Backstreet Boys, who were now just photos glued to the door of the old wardrobe — despite her immense fan love, she found their reality too beautiful, too romantic to fit with her own, and could no longer identify with the songs. Not even the former male frenzy generated any emotion anymore; it was no longer fun, and after those two years she thought she had already “used” all the most handsome boys in the city. There was no one left she truly wanted to enchant; she was without stimulation.

Her relationship with her mother was also extremely shaken, because her mother had read the girl’s diary, and one day, when Kat came home from school, she questioned her about Marcelo, the first boy, with whom the entire experience was described in the diary’s pages. The girl’s fury was greater than her fear of being discovered. She cried for weeks over having been betrayed by her mother and swore never to trust anyone again, not even her. She had not spoken to her father for almost two years; now she also did not speak to her mother, and the morning mantra returned to be the same: every day she asked God to be taken away from there. She spoke with Him, even if still somewhat shy in that relationship,

so distant and shaken, which existed only because of her mother's Catholic habit of praying the Our Father every night — and it stopped there. Kat felt it was not very genuine; she felt more closeness to and admiration for her favorite singer, Renato Russo, than for God.

The neighborhood where she lived was, so far, the most violent she had ever known; it was not only poverty that affected the minds of those who lived there, but the frequent deaths in the middle of the street, where every day a neighbor or an acquaintance died. Stray bullets pierced the walls of the family's house and nearly killed someone even inside the bedroom, while sleeping.

Chaos had settled into life. Now it was not only inside the house, it was outside, it was everywhere. Although the girl had earned respect outside the home at great cost, she constantly asked herself, *"Is this the society whose respect I want?"* Nothing made sense, nothing fit; no explanation helped her understand everything that was happening. Her mother forced her to read books, but she vehemently refused. She could not stand reading books; she had read some religious and Spiritist books around the ages of nine or ten, but had never finished any of them, or skipped many pages and read only the beginning and the end, so she decided she would no longer read. At that point, only music — lots of music — and translating rock lyrics from English were her only distraction.

She did not care much about anything; there was little emotion involved in anything. Even the deaths by gunfire she had witnessed had become normal to her; she no longer felt sorrow, fear, or pity. The only thing that bothered her were the constant nightmares. For years she had been unable to sleep; they took over the few minutes of rest she managed to get. They were terrible things, always spirits and demons chasing her relentlessly, spine-chilling situations. Never again a spark of hope, never again a breath of change — she was inert, and once again everything seemed lost.

Nothing else made her think anymore, nothing stimulated her intelligence;
she only knew how to criticize everything and everyone who did not let her grow or move forward… until one day she learned that one of the students at her school had committed suicide.

On a winter morning, she arrived at school late as usual, only to find out that classes had been suspended that day and all the students were being informed about Diego's funeral.

— Which Diego?! — the girl asked, euphoric and desperate for it not to be someone she knew, especially a certain Diego she already had in mind.

— Diego, from the second year… No one knows much about him, he was very quiet, but his father owns a bar not far from here — replied a more informed classmate, to Kat's despair, because by then she was already imagining which Diego they were talking about.

Little by little, asking one person and then another, she confirmed that Diego was the son of the owner of one of the bars where her father spent most of his time. He was the quiet boy she had known for years but had never paid attention to. Every day, when she passed by, Diego would look on quietly and shyly, and a few days earlier he had gathered the courage to start a conversation, always awkward and with little to say. The afternoon before — on the very day he killed himself — timidly and with a gentle voice he had tried to get closer, but Kat, as always, had paid him no attention. In her mind, Diego was not popular, not very intelligent, not very good-looking — so why would she give him any encouragement? At most, she exchanged a sentence or two with him so he would not be talking to himself, since he would walk with her across the courtyard while she tried to avoid attention, sometimes changing direction so the conversation would not drag on…

Diego killed himself with a gunshot to the head, in the bathroom of his father's bar, which was located one block from one of the houses where Kat had lived.

He killed himself with his own father's gun, at seven o'clock in the evening, during business hours, with the bar full of people. He left no note, and no one — absolutely no one — knew the reason why he had killed himself.

Kat immediately decided that she would go back home and would not attend the wake like the other students. In the weeks that followed, classmates and family members said the boy had seemed somewhat sad lately, but since he had always been very quiet, no one thought it was anything serious. Kat even considered the idea that it might have been some kind of drug debt; she had seen cases like that on her street, where people killed themselves to protect their families from traffickers, who had no mercy. Many addicts bought drugs on credit, and traffickers sold to them because they knew addiction spoke louder than common sense, and that the person would give up their car, their house, or steal from someone — sometimes even from a family member — to pay off the debt. Sometimes the debt grew too large and the addict could not pay, so traffickers threatened to kill family members one by one until the debt was settled. And the politics of terror always worked; the addicts, afraid and knowing the threats were not bluff, did everything they could to pay, even if little by little. Those who could not, however, fearing that their family would be murdered, preferred to take their own lives — that way the traffickers would have no one left to collect from and the family would be safe.

Kat and some people thought this might have been Diego's case, but everyone said the boy did not use drugs, at least those who spoke about it. Very little was known about him; Diego had no friends, but he was a very sweet boy, an exemplary student, had never gotten into trouble — at school or at home — helped his father and always treated everyone with respect. In the weeks that followed, Kat thought a great deal about what had happened.

In a dream:

— What afflicts you is not the fact that Diego died, but that you treated him as if he didn't matter… Besides you, many others treated him that way, until he truly felt like that. And isn't that what you wanted with this behavior — that people would do what you "command," that the way you act would influence others? Well, you are influencing them, just like everything you do on Earth!

— My God, it was my fault! If I had talked to him that afternoon… He liked me… I could have changed something, if I had given him importance I could have saved him! I was a terrible person!

— It wasn't only with Diego; you have been like this with everyone… You have killed them within yourself and no longer feel compassion. On the contrary, the world has made you hard, and now you feel the need to defeat people, to hurt them… It is almost a form of revenge: because you believe the world hurt you so much, you now return that harm to the world. But you are not hurting those who hurt you; you are hurting those who suffer the most, those who need support the most. You complain that the world was unjust to you and made you suffer, and now, without realizing it, you have become the same and are committing the same harm that was done to you, against people who are innocent and gentle like you once were. It is like hurting yourself twice.

Doesn't your mother always tell you that you need to stop being so bitter, that you should stop holding on to so many resentments? You should listen to her more about that. And you should first clean your own eyes before looking outward, because you are seeing the world through distorted lenses — what you see is not what truly is! The principal is not a being without family, without children, who mistreats children; she is in fact a good wife, a loving mother, someone who loves caring for her flowers, with a very good heart and good character. Your schoolmates are not animals either, as you so often refer to them — first because calling someone an animal should not be an insult, since animals are beings of such magic and so much Light, and second because they are simply very young people who, like you, are just trying to understand themselves and the world. They too will change and learn with time, just as you will.

— Yes, but what did you want me to do? Do you want me to be a fool like I was before and put up with everything in silence? — the girl snapped, furious.

— I don't want you to be anything. I have no expectations of you. In our relationship there is no demand; I only want you to stop feeling pain… I want you to stop feeling the great emptiness you feel. I want happiness for you, and I have come to tell you that you are not on the right path — you are going in the opposite direction.

— You don't know what you're talking about! My life is very difficult, and it was very difficult to get here! It's easy to judge me now and say that I'm a horrible person…

— I didn't say that. Those words are yours…

— I don't care! It's easy to come here now and judge me. You don't know me, you don't know who I am, and after all, who are you anyway?

The Voice remained silent.

— That's right! — the girl continued, furious. *— Go away then, disappear, vanish from here! I'm tired of everything, of everyone. I don't need your opinion or your shitty advice!* — now, without realizing it, she sounded just like her father.

That morning, when she woke up, her mother bumped into Kat in the hallway of the small house and noticed how she no longer really saw her daughter, since she was always locked in her room, silent. No one saw her around the house or heard her voice; even the radio she listened to at very low volume, lying on the floor with her ear close to the speaker so that no one could hear even the songs she listened to. It was like retreating into a cocoon; inside her behavioral and psychological cocoon she felt less exposed, safer.

That day, however, her mother tried to approach her.

A little worried about her daughter, she ventured to say that Kat was very angry and behaving far too harshly, and, encouraged by some greater force, decided to talk about God.

— Pray to God, my daughter, please! You are not well! Try to calm down a little, it seems like you hate everything and everyone! Please, life is not as horrible as you think!

— God!? To hell with God!

— Girl, have you gone crazy!? Don't say something like that!

— What has God done for us until today? Aren't you tired of being a foolish dreamer?

— Listen here, girl, you respect me. I won't give you the freedom to talk to me like that!

— What has God done for you until today? God… You want respect, then leave me alone! I'm here minding my own business, I'm not bothering anyone! I don't even talk to anyone in this house, precisely so I won't have friction or problems! So just leave me alone!

— For the love of everything that is sacred, stop this revolt against everything!

— Leave me alone! This has nothing to do with God. I'm simply not like you, and I don't know how to coexist with you. So the problem is you, not me! I'm not like you, and thank God for that — it's the last thing I want to be! So if you think I'm strange and think I'm going crazy, great, that makes me happy!

After saying this, she hurried into her room and locked herself in again.

CHAPTER 7

With maturity come the first great lessons, and vice versa

The girl moved houses once again, and now lived in a neighborhood that was a little less dangerous, in a house that was a little less chaotic. It was slightly bigger and accommodated their things better, and it was also much closer to the school, which made life easier, though it did not lessen Kat's bad mood. Still, even if imperceptibly, it brought hints of hope to the girl's mind, and she began to grow stronger each day.

There was also Cigana now, an older neighbor, seventeen years old, who lived two houses away and attended the same school. She too had an alcoholic father, but she behaved very differently from Kat. Cigana had run away from home several times and was badly spoken of in the neighborhood; she had almost no female friends and was involved with many men. Perhaps it was precisely this posture that made Kat begin to adore her. For many months they went to school together, but Cigana skipped practically all her classes and did not allow anyone to call her a "friend"; she said that was already too much expectation, and Cigana was a completely free spirit.

No one — absolutely no one — told her what to do or how to be; she simply did not accept orders or concepts. She was like the wind, strong and untamable, blowing wherever she wanted, whenever she wanted. Although she disappeared for days at a time, every so often she would reappear without warning, and by then Kat did everything she could to become her friend, to stay close and learn everything possible from the one person who, so far, seemed to be the only one she truly identified with. Kat's mother, however, was against that friendship; she said Cigana was not good company, that she "knew what she did out there," and that she was very badly spoken of. Those words only increased Kat's hatred toward her mother and did nothing to weaken her relationship with Cigana, who became more and more a part of the girl's life each day.

Cigana herself, however, confirmed what Kat's mother said; she said out loud and clearly that she was not good company for anyone, and she never sought Kat out — it was always Kat who followed her. Until one day a wild admiration for Cigana took hold of Kat. Cigana's life seemed so fun; she was so happy, detached from everything, and despite all her problems at home she had managed to find herself in a life on the streets. Cigana was very popular with the boys, and none of them dared mess with her. They idolized her, and Cigana had fun with everything. She made fun of everyone and never came out on the losing end; it was as if people were addicted to her energy — everyone wanted to be close to her.

And Cigana was no beauty standard. She had been in a car accident in which her father, drunk, crashed head-on into another vehicle, nearly costing her her life; some of her front teeth had been driven into the bone, leaving her toothless and scarred. By the time Kat moved near her house, the teeth were already being corrected with braces and the toothless mouth had been partially fixed, as well as the scar on her head and mouth. For many years everyone at school remembered how Cigana had looked after the accident, including Kat, who had seen her in passing several times at school, but had never approached her.

Now that girl had become the center of everything, and going to school had turned into Kat's favorite time of day, simply because Cigana was there.

One day, thinking to herself, Kat decided to talk to her friend about the brilliant idea she had had.

— Cigana, I need to talk to you. I've made a decision, and I need your help with it. I can't be a virgin anymore! — Kat said, euphoric and happy, as if she had discovered the solution to all the problems in the world.

— Huh? What do you mean? But you're not even dating anyone! — Cigana said, amused and jovial as always.

Kat felt good and trusted Cigana one hundred percent, precisely because she never judged anyone and was never prejudiced in any situation.

— Exactly! That's exactly it! I've been thinking, and one of the things I fear most in this life is falling in love with some idiot man and becoming an idiot like my mother. And I've seen girls at school become the butt of jokes at the boys' hands because they fall in love and choose that "perfect person" to have sex with, and then the boys step all over them, turning them into real emotional punching bags, because for the girls it's as if nothing else in the world matters except the boy… I've already been through that when I was very young, and I couldn't stand going through it again, especially if it has to do with sex. I wouldn't be able to handle some son of a bitch man bragging at the expense of my name! Saying he was the first, that he had me, that now he owns me — all those absurd things we hear every day that make me want to throw up, you know!

— But then the solution to that would be never having sex, because any man will say that, will act like that — they're all the same…

"No, but I had a brilliant idea, I've already thought of everything, just listen! I'm going to choose someone totally random, someone far away from school, someone I don't feel anything for, and someone I'll never be able to feel anything for, someone who isn't even my type, and I'll have sex with him without letting him know I'm a virgin, that way he'll never be able to brag or take advantage of me."

"But what about your parents!? Huh? Without the boy knowing, but... how!? My God, how are you going to do this!? Wait, you're not doing this because of my influence, right? Please! I always told you I don't want to be an influence on anyone! I warned you not to get too close to me!"

"No, no! It has nothing to do with that, don't worry, it was my decision."

"And your parents?... If they find out, they'll kill you, and kill me too, thinking I influenced you! You have to promise that if this happens you'll explain that you had this idea on your own and that it had nothing to do with me! My intention was never to influence you to do any of this."

What Cigana was saying was true, however all the topics about sex and everything she did with boys she would tell during the nights when Kat slept at her house, leaving Kat and Vanessa, Cigana's 14-year-old sister, very curious and interested in the subject. In Kat's house no one talked about sex, ever; her mother only spoke about it when she wanted to warn the girl about something terrible. Kat, on the contrary, attributed all of Cigana's strength, light and grace to this. "She's special," she thought, "I don't know anyone else like her and it can only be because of her sex life, that gives her strength to be free."

"But you're only 12 years old, how are you going to do it at your age? You're still very young, no boy in their right mind will believe you're not a virgin..."

And another thing: when we lose our virginity, it hurts and it bleeds — what are you going to do about that? — Cigana asked, thinking that if she said all the downsides out loud the girl would give up on the idea.

— I've already thought of everything. About my age, I'll lie! From today on I'm no longer twelve, I'm eighteen, and you have to help me with that! Everyone has to lie about it from now on. And as for virginity, no one knows whether I'm a virgin or not; I've never talked about this subject with anyone, and no one knows me well enough to know what happened in my past. As for the pain, on the day I'll take a painkiller, drink a lot, be strong, and try not to make too much of a face. And to hide the blood I'll buy a grape-flavored condom!

— Grape? You really are crazy! — Cigana said, laughing.

— Yes! Grape or strawberry. That way you won't be able to see the blood, and in the worst case, if I still bleed, I'll say I'm on my period!

— Wow! And you're doing all of this for what, exactly?

— So I won't give any man power over me! So I won't give any of them the pleasure of saying they were special to me! I don't accept that! From no man — none of them are worth anything!

— Okay, and you said you need my help. What do you need my help for?

— Well, you know — you're the one with experience with boys. I want you to teach me everything!

— What do you mean!?

— I want you to show me how to do it, how to act. I need to orchestrate the perfect plan and perform perfectly, so the boy doesn't notice. In fact, that's one of the main reasons I want to do this! As an actress I feel like I'm missing something, that my adult colleagues can perform certain scenes better than I can because they've lived more, and I believe sexual experience is a major life experience!

And it was. She had no idea how much her life was about to change after that day, or how that decision — made more as a game, more as adolescent bravado — would change her destiny forever, especially in the years that followed.

And so it was that, a few weeks later, on a summer night, when she already felt ready to make her choice — while her mother was out of town on one of the work trips in which she accompanied her husband — together with Cigana, who by then had already taught her everything and more than she thought she needed to know, they met a young man of the sign Taurus…

— *Look, right there, under the palm tree!* — Kat said.
— *Where?*
— *There, the one in the blue shirt! Wait, let him turn around! There! The one who's smiling now!*
— *The one with braces?*
— *He has braces?*
— *Yes, he's wearing braces.*
— *That's it, it's him!* — Kat said when she noticed the braces.
— *Do you know him?*
— *No, I've never seen him in my life!*

Kat and Cigana then began to approach the boy, who was on a busy street, crowded with people, in front of the beach where all the city's bars and a music truck were gathered. He was talking with some friends, all of whom seemed much older, between twenty and twenty-five years old — but so did Kat. She was fully made up, wearing high heels, a miniskirt, large earrings, costume jewelry, and clothes she had secretly taken from her sister's wardrobe.

With a glass of caipirinha in her hand, she and her friend drew closer to the boy, who was very handsome and smiling, completely unaware of what was about to happen. Kat already had two fake IDs stating that she was twenty-one years old,

which allowed her to do practically anything she wanted and enter any trendy nightclub at the time — something she already did frequently. She was finally enjoying life, being a little happy, she thought, on the rare occasions when her mother let her spend the night at her friend's house, since she trusted Cigana's stepmother to take the two of them out — little did she know that the stepmother was extremely liberal and behaved more like a friend than a guardian…

— *Hi!* — the boy said, somewhat confused, to the two girls, who by then were practically dancing on top of him.

— *Wow, sorry! It's so crowded here, right? I think I spilled a little drink on you,* — Kat said, pretending not to notice.

After almost two hours of conversation, Cigana, drunk and excited, decided to satisfy her curiosity and asked the boy:

— *How old are you?*

— *I'm twenty-two. And you?*

Cigana started laughing and said nothing. Kat, in turn, asked:

— *How old do you think I am?*

— *Twenty-five.*

— *Twenty-five?!* — both of them exclaimed, bursting out laughing.

— *Yes, twenty-five. How old are you?* — the boy asked Kat again.

— *I'm eighteen.*

— *Wow, you look older!*

— *Really?*

— *Yes — not because of your looks, but because of your maturity. You talk like someone much older…*

— *What's your sign?*

— *I don't even know… I'm from May.*

— *Then you must be a Taurus! What day in May?*

— Yeah, I think that's right — Taurus.

The girls laughed a lot, making fun of the Taurus boy, who didn't understand anything but smiled anyway.

That night the two of them kissed, and Kat's cold plan began to be put into action.

The girls then grew extremely close. Cigana, perhaps because she admired Kat's courage in doing something so drastic and so different from everything else, felt more comfortable sharing things with her friend. Kat, who had already admired Cigana before, grew happier each day, because now she finally had a friend — someone to talk nonsense with and laugh hard, someone who didn't judge her and didn't think she was weird or crazy. Now, coming from Cigana's mouth, the word *"crazy"* sounded like a compliment for the first time; being crazy there was synonymous with fun, with long nights of conversation and learning about everything. No more boring conversations with anyone, no more sadness from always being alone at home as if there were no world outside. Now there was a world, and it was immense, full of incredible things and incredibly fun.

In the days that followed, Kat carefully planned everything for the big night, with great excitement, since the Taurus boy had become quite infatuated with her. But Kat, as planned, felt absolutely nothing; she remained cold and calculating in every detail.

To Cigana's surprise, everything went exactly as Kat had planned. The girls laughed a lot when Kat told her that the boy, right after the act, had asked how many boys she had already slept with.

— How many…? Uh, I don't remember, why? — said the girl, who had not thought of an answer to that question and had not calculated how many guys an eighteen-year-old girl might have slept with. For a second her mind spun and almost short-circuited before the boy replied:

— No, but… was it more than twenty or less than twenty?

Kat then, trying to keep a serious expression and at the same time feeling proud of the success of her performance, of her skill as an actress, replied:

— No, no… fewer than twenty!

— Wow… but how many? More or less than ten? You seem like such a quiet girl, I've never even seen you around town, and at the same time so "experienced"… Where did you learn to do these things? I mean, we live in a small city and I've never even heard of you… I keep wondering who those boys were, since I know almost everyone in town.

And the questions didn't stop there, but the girl, who had not devised any "post-sex" plan, soon left before her success went down the drain.

In the weeks that followed, the boy called Kat every day, sent messages before going to sleep and as soon as he woke up, completely in love, and Kat tried as hard as possible to keep her family from suspecting anything. The boy wanted to see her every day, but she said she didn't like men that much and would only see him once a week, that she had her own life and didn't want to stray from her plans. Because she had no phone credit, she never called or sent messages, which made it seem to the boy that she was very busy; he didn't know the lack of replies was due to lack of credit. He assumed it was lack of interest, or that he was dealing with a mature woman with countless responsibilities.

And that was how the twelve-year-old girl, now living an almost adult life, ended up unintentionally passing herself off as a mature, young, determined woman, when in truth it was simply lack of phone credit and a youthful lack of interest from someone who was not actually interested in any of that with men and the like… But the Taurus boy didn't know that. To him, Kat was his almost-girlfriend, strange and perfect; the girl's lack of communication — since she often preferred to stay quiet so as not to ruin the biggest joke and the most fun adventure of her life — so far sounded to him like a sweet mystery he dreamed of unraveling.

And Kat, without realizing it, went from a sad girl to a more-than-happy adolescent. Everything was going well with her studies; at school she no longer cared about anything people said — who would care about a bunch of immature children when you had an almost-boyfriend of twenty-two years old, a man, who was above all those kids in every possible way? She had even made friends in her classroom; everything was going very well. Cigana, as happened from time to time, had disappeared again.

This perfect relationship, in which messages and phone calls from the Taurus boy came without Kat even thinking about him, made afternoons and life feel fuller; life made sense again. Yet the girl attributed none of this to the boy, but entirely to herself, giving full credit to her elaborate plan.

One day her sister, by chance, ran into the Taurus boy at a party and tried to ruin everything by telling him Kat's real age, in order to embarrass him. However, he was convinced that he knew Kat well and that she would never lie to him, so he told the girl everything, which ended up causing a huge fight at home with her mother and sister. Even so, the relationship with the Taurus boy was not shaken; he continued calling and sending passionate messages, insisting on seeing her more often, which was not possible because of Kat's real age. The girl, however, even though she still thought of the Taurus boy merely as a diversion, was already getting used to having him always around.

Three months passed like this, in perfect harmony; now Kat was thirteen years old, the boy was in love, and she was happy… Until, one day like any other, the boy did not call or send any messages.

During the first two days Kat thought it was due to lack of time, or that maybe he had forgotten, but on the third and fourth days anxiety and despair began to take over her.

She imagined nonstop what might have happened, talked about it with her friends at school, almost crying, saying that the boy had disappeared and that she was sure something was very wrong. Her friends tried to calm her down, saying that it was certainly nothing, since the last time they had spoken he had shown no sign of dissatisfaction at all.

Finally, after almost a week, Kat managed to get a phone to call the boy. He answered as if nothing had happened, and the girl asked, *"What happened? Aren't we seeing each other anymore?"* He replied, *"Ask yourself! What do you think? Are we?! We haven't talked for a week — of course we're not seeing each other anymore."*

At that moment everything went dark, her legs gave way, and her stomach churned. Kat did not know what to do with the turmoil she felt inside. She was shaking and had a lump in her throat, and right there in the street, before even getting home, she cried. Tears streamed down as if the world had ended, as if the ground had disappeared beneath her feet. She tried to think of herself, to remember who she had been three months earlier, before meeting the Taurus boy, but she couldn't. It was as if all the life she knew had begun three months earlier and had now ended.

Immediately, seeing how lost she was, she changed direction without realizing it and called Cigana.

— I need to meet you; the Taurus boy broke up with me. I need to hook up with another boy immediately so I can forget him and stop feeling this thing that I don't even know what it is! It feels like asthma! — the girl said, in a panic.

— Come over. I'm at a party outside the school. There's a demonstration with a band going on, and I'm here with a friend of mine — I think you'll like him.

Kat, with asthma, a tight chest, and swollen eyes, headed toward the street party where Cigana was. It was still seven in the evening, and Cigana's friend — a twenty-six-year-old man — was waiting for Kat with a strange look.

— *What's your sign?* — Kat asked the boy as soon as she arrived, hoping he might resemble the Taurus boy in some way.

— *Uh… I'm a Libra…*

Kat, not at all impressed by the boy's sign, shrugged. Right then and there she completely lost interest.

It was already past ten at night when the Libra man offered to take Kat home, and Cigana ran off somewhere, leaving the two of them alone. Kat did not understand her friend's behavior and, with little choice, went with the boy.

Soon, however, she realized he was not taking the route that led to her house.

— *What are you doing?* — Kat asked, her voice already raised, noticing that the boy was stopping the car and clearly had no intention of taking her home.

— *Come on, I want to show you something…* — the boy said, looking down.

— *No, no, I'm not going anywhere. I'm sorry, but you're not my type.*

The boy — blond, blue-eyed, with an athletic build — looked at Kat as if dismissing what she said.

— *Come on, don't be stupid! You're being very childish! They told me you were kind of a kid anyway!*

Those words pierced Kat's ears like two knives. There was nothing in the world she hated more than being called that. She had already been mocked for some time because of it: Artur, the second older boy she had been with, had spread through the entire school that she had never kissed anyone on the mouth and that, on top of that, she was a liar, because she had said she had kissed many.

And that had been a source of humiliation for an entire year. She could not allow that to happen again, she thought.

So, without quite knowing what was happening, she got out of the car.

— *All right! So what do you want to show me? What is it that's in there?*

The boy merely looked up and down the street to make sure no one was watching, took her by the hand, and led her inside the house, where there was only an old bed and an old refrigerator. Everything inside the tiny house was very messy and dirty.

— *Where are we!?* Kat asked, still believing the boy was a friend.

— *Relax, sit here!* — the boy said, sitting down on the bed.

She sat beside him and stared at him, still trying to understand what he wanted with all that. Then, without warning, the boy jumped on top of her, grabbed her forcefully, kissed her, and ripped off her blouse.

— *What are you doing? Are you crazy!?* — the girl said, trying to free herself from the boy's hands and mouth. He said nothing and squeezed her even harder, as if Kat were a puppet. Then, worried about the neighbors, he told her to stop making noise, said he knew she wanted the same thing he did, and that she didn't need to pretend to be difficult.

When the girl finally managed to break free, the boy said that if she didn't do what he wanted, he would speak badly of her to everyone in the city and that everyone would make light of her. The girl adjusted her blouse and, filled with rage, walked toward the door of the house. Deeply shaken, not knowing what to think about that night, which had already become as macabre as her nightmares, she went down the street aimlessly.

Meanwhile, she remembered her mother's words — that whenever she spoke badly of Cigana, she warned her daughter to be very careful, because people like that were not respected by men, and that one of them might treat her badly simply because she was walking around with Cigana.

After walking about ten meters, trying to put her thoughts in order so she could orient herself and figure out how she would get home, she finally realized where she was. Because she had moved houses so many times, she recognized the neighborhood — she had lived not far from there before. After walking for three hours, around one in the morning, she arrived home. This was one of those periods when everyone was traveling, and she had once again been alone for several weeks. She lay down on the bed without even realizing she had made it home. After walking so much, and with adrenaline running high, her legs throbbed, as did her head, but she didn't know what to think; her thoughts were nothing but fragments of everything. Then the tears began to fall frantically, as if a dam had burst. She didn't even know why she was crying, didn't even know what she was feeling. She just cried.

Suddenly, the house phone rang. It was already 2:30 in the morning! She looked at the time, startled — it had to be her mother. She called almost every day at that hour to make sure her daughter was not disobeying her orders not to go out while she was traveling. By then, the mother had already accepted Cigana as someone close to the family and had also become friends with the girl's stepmother and father, with whom she would rarely allow Kat to go out at night and would let her sleep over when the girl insisted enough. That night, on the phone, Kat made an effort to sound as if everything was fine. Her mother would never forgive her if she told what had happened; she would never let her go out again. The mother often told people in the neighborhood, *"I'm not my daughters' mother, I'm their friend,"* which to Kat sounded like a big lie and even irritated her, because everyone knew she only said that to try to look like a good mother in front of others.

“Is it for them, or for yourself, that you want to lie?” the girl thought.

Kat criticized her mother’s way of being a great deal; she thought she was a terrible mother, and for that reason she never told her anything about what happened to her, in order to avoid endless arguments and complaints. *“But when I really need her, she’s never there,”* Kat thought *— “the rebel.”*

The girl then fell asleep. She found herself in a forest full of green, with trees that seemed to reach the sky. The sound of a stream and birds singing was deafening; the humidity in the air made it hard to breathe, and the sun shone high in the sky. She walked on the dark earth between the trees and played with giant butterflies that passed by her. *“I’m in the Amazon,”* she thought joyfully. Everything around her was full of light and very colorful.

Suddenly, a gigantic shadow came toward her and struck her hard in the face. The shadow was hot, dense, yet it caused a tremendous wave of cold and a shiver down her neck. Kat began to run, desperate, crashing into trees, and, already with her skin covered in scratches, she realized that wherever the shadow passed it devastated everything. The colorful, enchanted forest landscape turned into a lifeless swamp, the sky darkened, and the only color that could now be seen was a deep blue. The sensation was of being alone in the world, running from something so terrifying that it didn’t even have a face or a form.

She ran and ran and ran, and when she could no longer bear it, she collapsed onto the damp ground, nearly fainting from exhaustion. Then she felt the great oppressive, hot shadow cover her. *I’m dead,* she thought, annihilated — the shadow had won…

The next second she woke up, frightened, on the floor of a white room.

— It doesn’t have to be this way.

— My God, where am I? The shadow! It wants to kill me! Where is the shadow? Run! We have to get out of here!

— Where you are, there is no shadow. I can guarantee that at this moment we are safe, even from the materialization of the shadows of your own thoughts.

Suddenly, it was as if time had stopped. The girl, who moments before had been on the floor, now saw herself seated at a small white table, calmly conversing with a figure whose face she could not make out. She could only see his long white robes and had the impression that he was a man. Seeing her own image sitting at the table, calmly talking to the supposed mystical figure, as if watching a scene from the outside, made her wonder who she really was then: who was real and who was "fake," the Kat who watched or the one who now spoke? When she tried to look down at her own body, she saw that it did not exist. She did not exist. She was only a transparent mass of consciousness; she only thought, heard, and saw, barely able to move through space, where she seemed to float.

Everything around was white and very bright, but it was an opaque light, like that of the energy-saving bulbs they had at home, like the lamps in a dentist's chair. Her vision blurred every time she tried to look at the man's face, but everything else was very clear. She had the sensation that they had already been there talking for hours and made an effort to understand what they were saying, but she could not; it was as if they were speaking another language. The words were clear, spoken distinctly, but they made no sense to her ears. She could identify the voice — it was indeed a man's. He walked around the room while she remained seated in the chair.

After what felt like hours compressed into minutes, she saw herself again on the floor of the room, in the same situation as before, as when she had fallen there the first time — like a flashback, as if a film were returning to a previous scene. Yet the people seemed like different characters. It was as if there were two Kats: one calm and light, and the other — well, the other was "Earth Kat." The man was standing near her.

— So I did love him, after all! I always loved him! How was I so stupid not to realize this before! He was everything to me! And now there's nothing left! — the girl said, crying intensely.

— Your world is what you make of it. The shadow that was chasing you is the shadow of your own sadness, and that was your perfect world. The pure love of a human being can turn a stone into a flower. It has the power to transform a cold swamp into a blooming garden. The problem is when it goes away… You never saw the beauty in your life, and that earthly boy, through the power of love, made you see it. But the beauty was always there, ready to be created. And now that he is gone, this is how the wave of sadness materializes: it comes and destroys everything that was created from that love, because the first love that should exist — the love for existing, for being — never existed.

— Why did he have to go? — the girl lamented, crying.
— Why did he leave without even giving an explanation?

— You met an earthly boy and made the flower of love bloom inside him, but you were careless with his feelings, and because of that the flower withered and died. You never gave him anything in return, you never told him you loved him; you were proud, and human pride is usually the most common cause of the death of all flowers.

— But what if I had said it, and he had laughed and made light of me?

— That would have hurt less than what is hurting now… Learn this: it hurts far less to lose someone because of love that was spoken than because of love that was left unspoken. Unspoken love turns cursed in the heart of the one who did not receive the affection that was owed to them. And about pain — understand that every human being has their virtues and their limitations.

You did not tell him you loved him because your experiences instilled in you a fear of relationships, a fear of emotional dependence, of needing another person affectively. And he, in turn, chose to distance himself for reasons that only the deepest core of his being can answer. In truth, the decisions humans make have very little to do with the present situation or with the person they are dealing with in the present; they are much more a convergence of experiences, tastes, and sensations from the past that unconsciously lead people to associate a current situation with one already lived — sometimes in a past far more distant than the one they know in this life, sometimes many lives ago. Thus, a situation becomes unbearable, pleasurable, or insignificant according to one's history of existence.

That is why one must never judge a human being, because it would be necessary to know their entire existence and analyze every passage in order to understand the true origin and reason for their actions.

— I also came to talk to you about something else, the Voice continued after a pause.

Immediately, the image of the Libra boy came into Kat's mind.

— The boy you met tonight. He could have hurt you very badly. You must pay attention to your decisions. With the sudden loss of love, human beings tend to lose their sense of self-respect, which on Earth is called self-esteem. Today you had none, and that attracted you to someone who is lost and who looks for girls like you — already emotionally weakened — to hurt them even more. That boy is being treated spiritually; he has already done to many girls what he did to you tonight…

The next day Kat woke up with her heart in pieces. She did not feel like eating or getting up, but she was determined to bring the Taurus boy back into her life. She told her school friends what had happened with the Taurus boy the night before, but she did not tell anyone what had happened with the Libra boy, because she felt far too ashamed.

Later that day, when Cigana asked her how things had gone with her friend, Kat simply said that he was crazy, that he had tried to grab her by force, and Cigana laughed, saying that he used drugs from time to time and that this could have led to that behavior, but that it was nothing serious.

In the months that followed, the girl — who before had never cared about any human being, with the exception of her mother, who now also mattered little — had only one thought: the Taurus boy. The entire world was reduced to a single soul, a single smile, a single embrace, a single person. And everything she thought and did was for him.

Months went by, and apart from the few calls Kat had dared to make to the boy's house, they had no contact at all. Until one day the phone rang — and it was the Taurus boy.

— Hello?

Even seeing that number on the phone display, she could hardly believe it; it was him. Euphoric, she arrived at school and told the girls the news: out of nowhere, the boy had called the night before to invite her out for the weekend.

— Just like that, out of nowhere? That's strange, it's been so long since you've seen each other! — one of the girls said.

— That's right! It happened just like that, and I don't care to know the reason — he finally came back! All my prayers have been answered and now we'll be happy.

With her eyes shining with joy, she repeated the same phrases constantly from the moment she woke up: *"Nothing is going to ruin my day today! No matter what happens! Nothing will put me in a bad mood today!"* She was referring to an entire life of sadness and bad days; she could no longer bear being unhappy. So that day, with the Taurus boy's call, she decided for the first time that life was perfect.

However, still that morning, around ten o'clock, the phone rang a second time. Her heart stopped, her throat went dry, her hands began to shake when the voice on the other end said: *"I'm calling to inform you that your little one has died… Dengoso didn't make it and passed away this morning, I'm very sorry. I tried calling your mother and your sister, but they didn't answer. Please inform them and tell us what to do with the body."*

— But how? How could he have died? — the girl said, desperate, barely able to believe the news. Dengoso had been hospitalized for five days with kidney problems, which the girl herself had identified, but the veterinarians had discharged him, saying he was cured and could go home that very day. *"So how could he have died? There's no explanation!"* Months later, they heard that on that day, at the clinic, what had really happened was that a German shepherd dog had broken loose and attacked Dengoso, who was lying on the examination table, still hooked up to an IV. It was never known for sure whether this was true; when questioned, the veterinarian insisted that Dengoso's kidney failure had been caused by low-quality cat food.

In the days that followed, no one spoke in the house. Dengoso, the family's mascot, had died… And now the entire house felt like a wake. Kat later came to realize that the ten-year-old cat had not been only her sole joy, but also that of every member of that chaotic house, which no one truly called a home. Yet when Dengoso was around, they almost felt like they were in a home… He was the pillar that held everything up.

Kat's anger toward her mother grew even stronger; she blamed her for the cat's death, for having been negligent with his health. Dengoso had been sick for a month, and Kat had tried to feed him and give him fluids by mouth, begging her mother to take him to the veterinarian, but she only said they had no money and that he would be fine, that he was just going through a rough patch, that he would soon get better and start eating again.

In a dream:

— It was her fault! She killed Dengoso! Those idiots! They killed Dengoso! It was their fault! — the girl screamed in the dream, filled with rage and with her vision blurred by the tears streaming down. *— And of all days, today, the very day I said nothing would wipe the smile off my face, God comes and does this to me! He must be up there laughing at me now! Are you happy now? Did you get what you wanted? You're the boss, you have to prove all the time who's in charge, don't you?*

— It's not quite like that. Dengoso left because he had already fulfilled more than he was meant to here. He did more than was assigned to him, much more, and he earned his rest.

— The veterinarian said he died because his kidneys stopped working, and that the reason was that we fed him cheap food his whole life. So once again the fault is this damn poverty! If we were rich and had money to give him better food, my son would still be here! What pain! What unbearable pain!

— It is good that you have this ambition. Even your ambition will lead you to the path where you need to be, to touch the lives you must touch and influence the lives you must influence. Everything will serve you. Nothing — not a single day, not a single event — will be in vain. You will see: every tear, every emotion, every loss or gain will serve some purpose in your life. Everything will be an important piece in your great puzzle of evolution.

— What evolution? I'm tired of everything! I cried for an entire year because of love — the very thing I tried so hard to avoid and that everyone told me was magical! What magic is there in this? Being happy for a few moments and then crying my eyes and my heart out for a year!?

— The thing is, everything we fear, we also attract. Your problem is not love, nor the lack of it; it is not trusting. It is always thinking you know what is best and not allowing life to follow its natural course.

However, do not blame yourself so much. It would have happened in another way if you had not interfered, but the outcome would have been the same. That boy came to teach you a valuable lesson, and you have already understood a good part of it, but you still persist in the mistake. Boys are human beings, with souls as noble and important as yours; they are not puppets to be used by you. No matter how much anger and lack of love you feel toward humanity, you must learn not to take it out on the wrong person. That boy did nothing to deserve being treated like a game, and after he left, you were the one who ended up carrying all the suffering.

In the weeks that followed, the boy looked for Kat again, and again, and again… But he made it very clear that what he wanted was only sex. He said outright that he wanted nothing with her beyond that. He called only once every fifteen days, suggesting that they meet always after eleven at night, and that she would soon be back home. Before long, the lies Kat told her mother in order to meet him no longer felt worth it, given the quality of the time they spent together and who he had become. The boy was no longer the same; he acted in a strange, different way, as if he were another person. And even though Kat had already decided how painful it was to meet him like that, to have him under those conditions, her love was greater, and she still could not say no to him.

Because of the depression caused by the breakup and also because of her obsession with the boy, Cigana had distanced herself. Kat no longer saw her friend, nor her friend's sister, for several weeks. Before disappearing, both had complained that Kat had become very annoying, because she talked about the boy all the time. They said they could no longer stand her constant refrain, and that even her jokes were always about him. Kat did not really understand the distancing; she thought she had two friends, but when she needed them most, both vanished. This made her feel even sadder. She heard around the neighborhood that Cigana's sister had been speaking badly about her.

She was upset, but not very surprised, because she had never trusted Vanessa; she had always thought her envious and somewhat fake. She only regretted having said, in front of her, things she had confided to Cigana. She was afraid that Vanessa might reveal some secret that should die without ever being mentioned. Her heart was already bleeding from everything, until one day Vanessa showed up, as she always did, calling to her through the window that faced the street. With a very fake smile, she said she wanted to come in and that she had missed her friend.

As usual, even against her will, Kat opened the door to her, and after ten minutes inside the house talking about nothing interesting, Vanessa dropped the bomb.

— Did you know that Cigana is living in a house downtown?… She ran away from home again…

— No, I didn't know. I haven't seen her for a few days — Kat said, already suspicious of why Vanessa was there. Maybe she wanted news about her sister, since Cigana sometimes preferred to disappear and asked Kat not to tell anyone where she was.

— Yeah… And did you know that yesterday there was a party at the house where the Taurus guy is staying?

At that moment Kat's eyes widened. *"The Taurus guy!"* she thought. *"She's bringing me news about him."*

— Staying, not really… the place he hangs out at, right? Because that house is his cousins' party house. He actually lives with his parents — Kat said, biting back her words, hurt that she hadn't even known about the party.

— Yeah… They say it was a wild party, by the pool, and that several girls slept there afterward.

Kat's expression changed, her heart began to ache, and she could no longer hide the look of pain on her face.

— And do you know who was there? — Vanessa continued, her voice full of suspense mixed with happiness, as if she were loving being the bearer of that news. — Cigana.

— Cigana was there? — Kat said, still trying to hide it, thinking with sadness about her friend and, without letting it show, thinking that she should have told her she knew about the party.

— Yes. And she and the Taurus guy hooked up!

— What!?

— Yes. They hooked up — Vanessa said, laughing.

— Hooked up? What do you mean? Just kissing?

— Wow… if only it were just kissing! They actually had sex. And Cigana told him everything!

— Told him everything?

At that moment the air began to leave her lungs. The girl, who was on the top bunk in the room she shared with her sister, started to see everything go dark and tears immediately began to fall, as if her heart and her entire chest were in pain and without anesthesia, literally breaking apart and dissolving into tears. What flowed from her eyes were not tears — it was her own chest, her own soul, as if it were leaving her body.

— My God… — the girl moaned softly, not even realizing that Vanessa was still there beside her. She, who had never cried in front of anyone, who hid even from herself that she felt anything at all, was now going through the most painful moment of her life in front of the biggest gossip and, apparently, the one who hated her the most and wished her the most harm.

At that moment, the phone that was in Kat's lap rang; it was the boy she had started seeing a few days earlier in a desperate attempt to forget the Taurus guy.

— Hello? — Kat said into the phone, swallowing her tears as if she felt nothing and as if it were a normal day.

— Hi — replied the twenty-five-year-old Aries on the other end of the line. — I'm here at work and I started thinking…

— Yes, tell me — Kat said, already knowing he was on a work trip, since they had spoken earlier that morning.

— I've been thinking, and I think it's better if we break up.

Kat was left completely without reaction on the other end of the line, apathetic and already hollowed out after having learned just minutes earlier that her best and only friend in the world had slept with the only person she had ever truly cared about. Without the presence of mind to respond properly, and not really understanding anything, in the maturity of a fourteen-year-old girl, she simply replied:

— Okay.

With no irony, with no emotion, even though the news caused her discomfort — after all, the boy had been a pleasant distraction, and perhaps she might even have started to like him now, just as had happened with the Taurus boy. Perhaps she did not yet know it, but maybe she was the kind of person who only wanted what she didn't have, and once she had it, failed to see its value… Even though all of this passed vaguely through her mind as she said that *"okay,"* all she could think about now was her disappointment with Cigana. That day she abruptly discovered a major trait of her own character that she had not known before: that the value of friendship to her was even greater than the value she placed on her beloved. Because the pain, which before had been only because of him, had now grown much larger — and the reason was the loss of Cigana, who, without dying, had died, at least within her.

The Aries boy, for no real reason, continued vaguely explaining the reasons for the breakup, and then, to the sound of someone arriving, said he needed to go and hung up.

In the very second she hung up the phone, Kat began to cry uncontrollably. Vanessa asked:

— Who was it?

— It was a boy I'd been seeing for a few days.

— And what did he want?

— I don't know what he wanted, but he called just to say he wanted to break up with me, Kat said without feeling any emotion, as if she were talking about the weather.

— That he wanted to break up with you? Wow! You really do have *uruca* (bad luck)! I've always told you, I've never seen a more unlucky person in my life! Everything happens to you! And all at the same time.

— Yes… — Kat replied, but as if she hadn't even heard, feeling only the dull pain of apathy over Cigana and the Taurus. The only two people who, until a few minutes earlier, had been the sole objects of all her admiration and affection now seemed as if they no longer existed. Not as if they had died, but as if they had never really existed at all. And as Vanessa went on, recounting the details, the less they seemed to exist. It felt as though even her memories of the two were slowly being erased, as if the last year of her life had never existed, since that time had consisted of the love and trust she had placed in both of them.

Kat no longer said anything; only Vanessa spoke, always with a smile on her face, as if with every word she were plunging yet another sharp knife into her, leading to yet another internal death; the sensation was that her senses would shut down at any moment… Her ears throbbed, her blood boiled, her cheeks were flushed, her hearing failed and then returned along with blurred vision, like in a horror movie in which the actors can't see the monster that strikes them.

— And about Cigana… You didn't ask me how I know all of this, but I want to tell you anyway: I know because she herself told me! She told me details of how the sex with the Taurus was, and also said that they were mocking you while talking about you. She told him that you love him and that you're obsessed with him… that you only talk about him… and she told him everything you go around saying. She said they were very drunk and that you were the joke of the night… and that it was a good thing you were there as a topic, otherwise the night would have been boring, because the Taurus is pretty bad in bed. Bad—no… she didn't use that word… she said, very clearly, "so-so."

Nothing more than *“what Kat talks about him anyway!”* She even joked, saying that you were a liar and that you had fooled her with all that false advertising about him.

— It’s fine… I understand now… and I thank you for telling me, whatever your reason may have been for making that decision. But now I’d rather be alone, if you’ll excuse me, please — Kat said calmly, already knowing that Vanessa’s reason for being there was pure malice, and truly to see her suffer, and she wasn’t going to give her the pleasure of that spectacle.

— Yes… I only told you because you always preferred Cigana! You always snubbed me and were always proud to say you were her friend. You always thought she was more of a friend than I was, and now you’ve learned, I think, right? Now you’ve seen that your mother was right, and that Cigana isn’t, and never was, anyone’s friend. She only thinks about herself. I admit I wasn’t a good friend to you either, I admit I spoke badly about you and did bad things behind your back — I won’t be fake and lie — but your *“little friend Cigana”* did much worse!

Kat, already ushering Vanessa toward the exit door, couldn’t believe everything that was happening; it felt more like a scene from a Mexican soap opera.
[Translator’s note: “novela mexicana” is a common Brazilian expression referring to over-the-top, melodramatic soap operas.]

And now the absurdities formed a jumble in her mind; she could no longer tell who was worse: Cigana, who, despite being her best friend, had done this, or Vanessa, who had gone there to say all those things about her sister. She couldn’t understand whom she felt more hatred and envy toward, one or the other — Vanessa or Cigana.

And for a second, within the whirlwind of pain, she felt a drop of gratitude for no longer being part of that family, for no longer having any reason to trust those two. *“Better late than never,”* she thought. But as soon as Vanessa went out the door, she lay down on the living room couch and cried for hours, and when her parents arrived she went to her bedroom and cried for days…

Her mother kept asking what was going on, and Kat only replied that she couldn't say — and she truly couldn't, because how could she admit, after having defended Cigana so many times in arguments with her mother, what Cigana had done to her? How could she swallow such embarrassment, such humiliation, and hear her mother say *"I warned you"* forever? So she chose, as usual, to say nothing.

Even more surprising was the fact that the *Aries* boy called her just a few hours later, that very same afternoon, to say that it had all been just a joke, that he wasn't breaking up with her, that he had only said that to see the girl's reaction…
[Translator's note: "ariano" literally means someone born under the zodiac sign of Aries.]

Kat, still in shock over the Cigana-and-Taurus situation, couldn't even respond properly; she just listened and tried to understand the words he was saying, struggling to focus on the present moment.
[Translator's note: "taurino" refers to someone born under the zodiac sign of Taurus.]

— Are you listening to what I'm saying? — the boy asked, laughing and sounding a little anxious on the other end of the line.
— It was just a joke, I didn't really break up with you.

— Oh, yes… yes… I'm listening.

— I only did this to see if you'd cry. To see if you had any feelings. But you don't! The nickname *"heart of stone"* still fits you! I don't think you're capable of feeling or crying.

Upon hearing this, the girl began to laugh at her own misfortune through her tears, and, looking at her blouse soaked from crying so much, she replied:

— You have no idea how ironic that sentence sounds right now! How do you know I'm not crying right now?

The boy, somewhat confused and knowing absolutely nothing about the recent events, replied innocently:

— You cry? You're crying? — and, upon hearing Kat's laughter on the other end of the line, he took it as mockery and continued — See? You don't care! You don't care about anything and you're even laughing at me.

Kat suffered a great deal, but this time she decided she would *share* the suffering… She would be with other people, use them when it was convenient, as she had done before, and go on living like that for as long as she could. After all the bizarre events of that afternoon — involving not only Cigana and the Taurus, but also the Aries calling just to pull a joke of extreme bad taste — which, had it been on an ordinary day, could indeed have caused her gratuitous pain and suffering — she thought that people really were idiots, and men even more so.
[Translator's note: "ariano" = someone born under the zodiac sign of Aries; "taurino" = someone born under Taurus.]

She never found out whether the Aries had really been joking, because he had seemed quite convincing during the first call when he spoke of breaking up. Perhaps it really *was* a breakup, and in the hours that followed he realized he wanted her again… She no longer knew what to believe. Without intending to, she became bitter; she trusted no one, and even without noticing it, she was now always on guard about everything.

And although she went back to seeing the Aries, as if that bizarre phone call had never happened, she was no longer exclusive with anyone. She even saw more than one person at the same time, completely lost respect for boys, and used them as a pastime on days when she had nothing to do; she ended up deciding that love and friendship were not for her. She thought she had already lived through everything with Cigana and the Taurus, and that now it was time to think about her career.

She then decided to focus on a modeling career, which was what would bring her the money to one day achieve her greatest goal: to pursue a career as an actress.

The problem was that she decided all of this without reckoning with life itself. She was too arrogant, too young, and couldn't imagine that life still had many loves in store for her, many false friendships… She would end up believing people far more cruel and malicious than Cigana and the Taurus would ever have dreamed of being.

As the years went by, the experiences grew worse and increasingly disappointing, until the girl reached a point where, midway between the profession of model and the dream of becoming an actress, she *stumbled into a marriage* at sixteen years old, and then into two more engagements within the span of two years.

Kat, for always living *on the edge*, at the peak of emotion, attracted many men to her. And it wasn't that she truly wanted to marry them, but how could she say no? She genuinely loved them, and because she longed for a family — and now, because she traveled the world and lived without roots due to her profession — she grew easily attached to her suitors, who in turn also became attached to her, drawn by her playful and unconventional way of being.

They would fall blindly in love, end up engaged after only a few weeks together, and Kat, because she enjoyed an adventure, would end up going along with it. But what should have been a life full of love and *"happily ever after"* had turned into a collection of fiancés who didn't take long to discover that Kat truly was a wild, untamable horse. Yet even upon realizing this unusual nature, they were happy to be by her side — until they understood that untamable horses are called that precisely because they do not adapt to routine, to the domestic, and marriage meant exactly that.

Having the perfect marriage may have lived among Kat's fantasies, since she only committed to men she considered perfect; but if the idea of marrying one day ever inhabited her fantasies, it certainly did not exist in her instinct, in the blood of a wild horse whose eyes were fixed solely on her own victory. Despite the serious commitments she had with men, her thoughts were always truly on her career and her dream.

She added to her healthy lifestyle — in which, out of necessity, she already walked for hours a day — other practices that benefited body and soul and aided spiritual and mental growth. She began practicing yoga and Pilates regularly, which helped her maintain focus and brought a bit more calm to that restless soul.

A short time later, she would also commit herself firmly to animal causes, becoming an activist and protector: rescuing street animals, caring for them and preparing them for adoption; raising awareness among people; contributing to NGOs.
[Translator's note: "ONGs" is the Brazilian acronym for NGOs (non-governmental organizations).]

She became a vegetarian, which brought major changes to her life in terms of health, and later, from time to time, she would also adopt veganism. She continued to refine herself more and more in meditation techniques. She practiced for increasing hours each day, and even though it took years of practice to truly clear and calm the mind, she never stopped trying. She was persistent and, as in everything in life, she never gave up.

She was forging her own *homemade warrior*, built at home, carefully crafted in the details, so that she could remain strong in the face of life's schemes and setbacks, even while being so alone. She was enough for herself, and these habits and practices were the secret to her independence.

CHAPTER 8

Cancer and the Cure

Some years later, in Paris:

— I've decided that the time has come — Kat was saying on the phone to someone.
— I'm going to leave everything here and go to New York to dedicate myself to an acting career. Yes, New York first, because there my agency said I can get modeling work at the same time; I'll study film and work there, and after a few months I'll go to Los Angeles, which is the final goal.

The girl, remaining faithful to the promise she had made to herself as a child — to become rich — chose a modeling career, but in truth so that she would have money for three things: to pay for her acting studies, to support her mother, who now depended on her, and to buy quality food for the cats, who were now three, so that they would not die of poverty like Dengoso.

Despite her few years of life, she was already very mature and experienced. She had reached that point with the strength of a lioness, but with a hardened heart, even though she had never once been abandoned by the *Voice*, and now, more determined than ever to focus 100% on what she believed to be the only reason she had made it that far — an acting career.

Now it was finally possible; she would finally be able to devote herself to what she had fought so hard to achieve. She had gotten everything she wanted, she thought, yet even so she was still a girl — deep down a little bitter and even somewhat unhappy, though no one noticed. Even though, with all the meditation and the vegetarian diet, many things had already changed within her — the result of healthy habits — she was still the same misunderstood girl as before. And depression seemed to have become a way of life; it came and went… sometimes without her even realizing it.

With experience, she had grown used to life tripping her up; she fell and got back up as if she hadn't even felt the fall. She was accustomed to fighting without ever losing her smile (even if it was a false one) and to the desire to go further, ever more obstinate. Yet she was not prepared for the blow that was to come. Life was once again playing a trick on her — and this one would be a big one.

In the very same week in which she had decided to leave everything behind and move to New York in pursuit of her dream, she received the news that her mother had cancer, in a terminal stage. And now, instead of retiring, she would have to work more than ever, far more than before, to be able to shoulder the expenses and the full cost of the treatment, since her mother — severely weakened by so many problems resulting from a car accident she had suffered — had lost years earlier her right to health insurance, and was also denied dependent status.

All the money Kat had saved to last an entire year in New York was gone in the very first month, consumed by her mother's treatments and surgeries because of the illness. Now, still in Paris, she was already desperate.

In a dream:

— You must calm down. She needs to go through this; she had to fall ill in order to heal… Serious illness comes into the body so that the human being awakens to a great truth. So that they may finally find the purpose of their life.

Without the illness, she would never be saved… Believe me, everything that happens is for the best; without the illness her recovery would be more difficult — said the *Voice*.

— But what about me, what will I do? Will I let her go hungry, will I not give her the conditions to save herself? I can't! I need to find a way, I need more money, she needs me! And I need help! I'm lost! I have no one to ask and I don't know what to do!

Suddenly everything turned into a beach; the sand was white and the sea transparent, and a man was looking for her, shouting her name as he walked along the long stretch of sand, trying to find her.

— I'm here! — Kat replied, unable to see anything because of the scorching sun blazing in the sky.

— My dear! — the man replied, running toward her.

Breathless, the man hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. He had an athletic build, but was much older, old enough to be her father.

— I've looked for you everywhere! Everywhere! My beloved, where have you been?

The girl, still somewhat frightened, with little to say, tried to remember where she knew the man from; but she looked around and saw everything very bright, very white and quiet, and had the feeling that she was no longer on Earth — yet she said nothing.

— At last the time has come! We will meet on Earth! I swore to you that I would always be here, and I always have been. I missed you so much! I have been looking for you everywhere, you can't imagine how much! Don't worry about anything, I am here now, and we will be together. Nothing bad will happen to you again; I will take care of everything! — said the man.

— Take care of what? — asked the girl, confused, still not knowing whether that man was a beloved from *other lives* or a relative, since the energy felt more like that of a father than of a boyfriend.
[Translator's note: "outras vidas" literally means "other lives," commonly implying past lives or previous incarnations.]

— Come to me! You will know where to find me!

And everything began to fade around her, fading, fading… until Kat woke up alone in her room, on a rainy, cold afternoon in Paris. By that point she was already depressed again; she only worked, and on days when she couldn't get work she took sleeping pills. Friends and her sister tried to give her renewed hope in life and talked to her about the *law of attraction*, about the book *The Secret*, which said it was possible to obtain anything one truly wanted — one only needed to fix one's thoughts, and everything would be drawn to oneself.
[Translator's note: "lei da atração" (law of attraction) and O Segredo (The Secret) refer to a popular New Age belief system and a bestselling self-help book asserting that thoughts can attract desired outcomes.]

So Kat began to do everything: all the exercises, all the attraction meditations. Lists, vision boards of everything she wanted. She began researching her mother's illness, and everything that could be done beyond conventional treatments — psychologically and spiritually as well — trying to find a way to save her. She was convinced she would be able to heal her mother, that this was merely an obstacle to be overcome, not an end.

A week later, one of her acquaintances in Paris offered her a last-minute job. The next day there would be a large wedding in a nearby town, and she, who was a nanny, had been hired to look after the children at the party, but could no longer go and was trying to convince Kat to go in her place.

— It's good money! You need money, and I couldn't find anyone available for this weekend.

Kat accepted, thinking of the money, but she was apprehensive. Although she had been a nanny for a few months when she was twelve, she hadn't worked at anything other than modeling for many years. She was afraid of messing things up, that something might go wrong. But she needed the money badly, so she went.

It was a beautiful castle in France; there were several tables and everything was already prepared. At three in the afternoon the first guests would begin to arrive, and with them the work would begin.

However, another girl arrived — a nanny — who, due to a misunderstanding, had also been hired, and in the rush the organizers hadn't canceled one of them. Now they would have to cancel someone, since there was budget for only one, so Kat was dismissed, but was kindly invited to stay at the party until the event ended, when she could be taken home.

Walking toward one of the castle gardens, she thought only about her mother and what she would do regarding the expenses and everything else. But perhaps influenced by the meditations from the book *The Secret*, in which she read every day that she should repeat only what she wanted to attract and not complain about misfortunes, she felt happy despite everything and full of hope in that beautiful place. *"How lucky I am,"* she thought, feeling the warm breeze on her face and hypnotized by that pinkish-reddish sky that was already ushering in the sunset to complete the splendor of the spectacle.

Facing a vast field, she sat down on a small concrete bench, feeling that it had already been worth being there just for the beauty of the landscape, which looked more like a masterpiece painted by a perfectionist artist. That was when, suddenly, a man sat down beside her holding a cup of tea — it was fresh mint tea, Kat's favorite. He handed her the cup as if he had been watching her for some time.

"How did he know that all I wanted at this moment was a mint tea? How does he know I'm addicted to tea at this exact hour of the afternoon?" she thought, smiling, a bit shy.

The man remained seated beside her, also contemplating the fields and smiling, without saying anything — yet saying a great deal. It was clear that that man was saying many things; *"How strange, I can almost hear him speaking inside my mind!"* she thought, intrigued. But it wasn't like other people's thoughts; it felt like a pure, selfless kind of thinking.

She thanked him for the tea with a smile and remained seated, looking ahead. The man would sometimes look at her and smile, then turn his eyes back to the fields. Then he asked something in another language, just as a second man arrived.

— She doesn't speak your language — said the newcomer to the man, in his strange language. — My boss would like to know if you'd like to eat something — he said in English, translating what the seated man was saying. — A salad, perhaps strawberries; they have excellent strawberries in this region — he continued, merely translating what that man with an easy smile and large, dark-blue eyes — round and bright like a baby's — was saying.

He was very well dressed, wearing a bright blue suit, and although much older than her, he had very youthful features, a loving, special countenance, and penetrating eyes. It was clear through his eyes that he wanted to do good. There was something very good about that man, she thought; she felt peace and well-being in his presence. The other one who had just arrived, the translator, was exactly the opposite: he had a dark aura and a false, soft voice, like someone who never quite said what he thought, only what others wanted to hear.

What Kat did not know was that this encounter — so casual, so unusual — would be the materialization of everything she had asked for in the preceding weeks. There stood the salvation not only of her situation, but also of her heart, of her soul — her hope in everything once again — since she no longer believed in anything; she merely worked like a robot and woke up every morning for nothing at all. She had no faith in men — nor in human beings in general; she had always thought none of them were any good, and now, especially after three relationships in which she had given everything she had and still failed, the last thing she wanted was to get involved in another relationship. Because of her taste for older men, people said she wasn't looking for a boyfriend, but rather for a father.

Kat cared little about the criticism; she truly only had eyes for older men, but it wasn't something she planned or could change — it simply happened. And now she was there, once again, sitting beside destiny, without the slightest idea of what lay ahead.

That slender man in the blue suit was the man from the dream on the beach.

— Oh, no, thank you, I'm fine — she replied, a bit shyly, declining the offer of strawberries.

Throughout the entire day, that man stayed by her side at the party; wherever she went, he went. He tried to communicate with her using words, without success, since he didn't speak any English; yet the communication they shared in silence was enough to make any telepath envious. Late at night, when it was time to leave, the man — always kind and smiling — asked that one of the cars parked outside the castle take her home. They exchanged phone numbers, and that very night she received a beautiful message, translated by an internet program. And the next day, at her apartment in Paris, there was a beautiful bouquet of white flowers addressed to the *"princess of the castle,"* accompanied by a card:

"Yesterday I met the princess of my castle of dreams.
An angel of light.
I don't know who you are, yet I have the feeling I see you in my dreams.
I will demand nothing from you; I only ask to be near you, if possible.
From noon onward, a car will be in front of the door where you were dropped off yesterday; if you wish, it will bring you to me; if not, it will wait until you dismiss it.
My only objective is to talk, to have lunch, to once again be together in the same space; nothing beyond your presence will be expected of you."

The girl looked out the living room window of the apartment where she rented just a single room, and there was a black car, parked in front of the building's gate.

Since she had no fear of anything, she felt no fear — she only thought: *"What a pity that I no longer trust any man; I'll have to go there just to say, 'I'm sorry, dear, I'm not an angel, I'm just a girl made bitter by life.'"*

After a few hours inside the car, she arrived at a place with very high walls and an enormous gate. It was a sunny afternoon, and the wind was not so cold. The car entered what seemed to be an endless garden, with flowers of every color, birds singing, everything meticulously cared for — as if it were unreal, like a movie set.

As soon as the car stopped in front of a house even more beautiful and enchanting than the garden, the driver — who had identified himself as the translator the afternoon before — got out and greeted her with a broad, fake smile. He then began to describe what a wonderful person his boss was: *"a man of many assets and gifts, very famous in his country, so I can't tell you his name,"* said the man, his mouth full, as if he were speaking of himself.

"I don't want to know his name; honestly, I don't care — just as I don't care to know what assets he has. I'm not trying to get anyone's money, and I've never depended on any man. I've always worked hard, and I've always said that as long as one has arms and legs, there will be work. So I'm not here to take advantage of anyone," the girl said, interrupting the translator, because she felt he was seeking an ally in his falseness in order to perhaps take advantage of his boss — or who knows for what; in any case, she wasn't interested.

The girl entered through the enormous door of the house, which had a very high ceiling, a double staircase at the center dividing three living rooms, and an open space that allowed one to see all four floors of the mansion right from the entrance. The house had large glass windows throughout, with colorful stained glass similar to those seen in Catholic churches; because of this, the light inside the room was breathtakingly beautiful.

The sun shone directly through the stained glass, illuminating and coloring the wide light-wood staircase, the white walls, and the entire expanse of the house, as far as the eye could see. They entered the room on the left, where fresh mint tea was already set on the table in a silver service in 14th-century French style, along with a lovely little bowl of strawberries, and a branch of white and orange lilies beside the chair where there was a note: *"Thank you for coming, Kate."*

And despite her name being spelled incorrectly, she thought, *"How does he remember my name? I don't even remember telling him my name!"* She also noticed that her favorite flowers were lilies.

— There's your tea — said the translator with a smile, pulling out the chair for Kat to sit. — And the strawberries too. My boss said he sensed that you wanted strawberries that day, but didn't accept them because you were embarrassed. Today, please feel at ease; he had the best in the region bought early this morning, and it wasn't easy to find them — said the man, always smiling, as if he were making every effort to please.

— But… — Kat said, looking at the strawberries and thinking, *"My God! How did he know all of this? How did he know that I adore strawberries and love eating them with tea? How did he sense that that afternoon I really wanted them, but was afraid to ask and be a bother?"* — But… how… I mean… how did he know…

— Ah, my boss is very observant and also very intelligent; he sees everything and notices everything. Even what we hide inside ourselves, he sees… You will be surprised; you have certainly never met a man like him — he truly is special.

The man soon arrived and joined them in the room, sitting at the large table beside the two of them. The relief and light that came over Kat's face were unmistakable when he entered the room. It was as if the sun itself had walked in.

And *“thank goodness he came quickly,”* Kat thought with relief, because being alone in the presence of the translator, with his broad, fake smile, sent shivers through her soul. But now everything would be fine, she thought, somewhat amazed; *“now everything would be fine, because the man from the bench was there.”* It made no sense at all, and yet, inexplicably, inside her chest it made perfect sense — though she still didn’t even know what to call him; she hadn’t asked his name, and given the circumstances, she decided not to ask.

— What’s your zodiac sign? — was the first thing Kat asked as soon as the man came close to her.

— She wants to know what your sign is — said the translator, smiling as he translated the question for the man.

— I’m a Sagittarius — he replied.

— Wow! Sagittarius! That’s not a sign I like… I don’t know, everyone I’ve met is very womanizing and superficial. They love to party; I’ve never managed to be more than friends with any of them.

The man sat down beside her and tried to joke, to talk about life and ask about hers. The translator translated everything, and she wondered whether he was doing it properly. She didn’t even trust him for that. Until, after a few laughs, the man asked:

— What do you want most in life?

— What do you mean? — Kat asked, turning to the translator. — What I want most?

— Yes — repeated the translator, confirming once more with the man that that was indeed what he was saying. — Yes, he’s asking… if you could choose anything in the world, what would it be — he said, listening and translating word for word.

— Well, if you had asked me that a few months ago, I would have told you it was a beautiful gold watch, just like the one he’s wearing — she said with a hint of laughter, pointing to the host’s gold watch.

The man translated, and everyone laughed.

— But — Kat continued — what I want today is something that money unfortunately cannot buy. What I want most in the world is my mother's health.

— What is wrong with your mother? — asked the translator.

— She has terminal cancer.

Upon hearing this, the man's features darkened with sadness. With his eyes cast downward, he said he was very sorry, and the three of them fell silent, thoughtful, for a moment. Then the two — the man and the translator — began to speak in their language, which the girl could not understand.

So Kat decided to interrupt them and say what she had come there to say.

— … Please tell him that I will not be with him. I am not that kind of girl… I would only be with him if it were for love, but I do not love him; I don't love anyone. I truly don't believe in love, nor do I want to believe in it. I only came as a friend, to talk and to say that we will not see each other again — but that I am grateful for everything nonetheless.

The translator conveyed her words and then translated the man's reply:

— He says he understands and respects your position, that he doesn't mind being just a friend and seeing you from time to time. If you wish to take a break from work for a few days, he is always traveling around Europe, for work and for leisure as well; however, he would like to pay for your mother's entire treatment… His mother died of cancer when he was ten years old; the family was very poor and could not afford the treatment, and his mother suffered greatly… He says he knows the pain you are going through.

In the months that followed, the man fulfilled what he had promised and provided the money for all of her mother's treatment — and much more. He paid for the film school the girl had always dreamed of attending, the luxurious apartment in New York, and everything else she could imagine or dream up.

He was in favor of absolutely everything, and gave full financial and psychological support so that she could go further in whatever she wished. He encouraged her intensely in her animal charity projects, films, videos, social projects, and all the adventures Kat got herself into. Once a month they would travel for four days to some hidden paradise in the world — visiting islands, caves, waterfalls — and they even went to Brazil once for work.

The girl, once desperate, without any prospects of money or love, now lived a playful fairy tale in which everything was perfect, and the man's love and dedication to her seemed to have no limits. Whenever they saw each other it was fireworks, gifts, magical dinners with flowers and diamonds, musical shows, public declarations of love, circus spectacles, interactive games, and everything else one could dream of; it was as if all her dreams materialized before her eyes the moment they were thought.

Inside her, the love for this man and the importance she gave him kept growing — even if very slowly, even unwillingly, even while she tried to resist believing, to trust — yet everything she had lived through in the previous months screamed that this man truly was special. Despite all the girl's childish misbehavior and bad temper toward him, the admiration and affection this man felt for her seemed unshakable; he did everything as if she were the one he had been searching for his entire life.

Always so gentle and tender in the way he spoke, as if speaking to a delicate flower, he affectionately nicknamed her *"general,"* since the girl, always very aggressive, had absolutely all her orders promptly obeyed — complete with salutes and all. When they were apart, he sent her beautiful love texts, always at the very minute she woke up, and at night, in the very last minute before sleeping. When together, he taught her about history, religion, culture, spirituality, and even communication through telepathy, which they used daily and always found amusing when they managed — even from different continents — to guess each other's thoughts…

“It was a perfect romance,” the girl thought. Now, three months later, they no longer needed the translator, even though he was present every time they met; the couple now used a cellphone app to translate their vows of love. She had taught him English and hired a private teacher to teach her his language. And so, little by little, they communicated, even though in that relationship they didn’t even need words — their eyes said everything. He looked at her, she looked at him, and understanding happened, as if by magic.

The girl had never imagined that someone like this could exist in the world — someone who understood her so deeply, so uniquely… And even when they were apart, there was not a single day of insecurity, not a single moment in which she doubted his love or his intentions.

Accustomed to a world of demands, in which no one truly wished her well, in which everything that was given was charged back double, and nothing had much value, the girl, for the first time, encountered a person who gave everything recklessly, endlessly, without boundaries — and never asked for anything in return, not even affection or a smile, which often did not come. The girl, who remained rebellious and swore independence, still had outbursts of anger, to make it clear that *“she was no man’s little woman”* and that she didn’t need any man, even if he were a perfect prince, absolutely without flaws and beyond any suspicion.

That man taught her everything. He was showing her what love was, and it seemed incredible — just as she had stopped believing that love existed, it felt as though God or something had placed that man there to make her believe again, to make her see that there were still men worth something, men who were worth it… *“or maybe not,”* she thought. *“Maybe he’s the only one.”*

No matter her lack of trust, what he was doing for her was far greater: he was giving her back hope in the world, a true belief in God, and — most importantly — he was bringing love back into the girl's life. In the very first week they were together, he turned to her and said:

"You have such a hard heart, so wounded, for such a beautiful and so young girl… Your soul was corrupted by suffering; your soul was broken… But I will fix it. I'm not going anywhere until I make you believe in love again."

And to make it even better, as if he were bathed in some liquid of luck, everything related to him worked out — and now everything related to the girl did as well. It was as if, because of him, everything around her energy became successful; since she had met him, work appeared effortlessly. The girl began to work much more.

And from time to time she found herself thinking that, although this was the time when she needed money the most — a time when anyone else would have gone bankrupt and given up on everything due to the illness and the pressure of responsibility brought on by her mother's cancer — ironically, it was the time when money appeared the most. It was as if it were loose leaves in the blowing wind, coming from all directions, unexpectedly. Luck was visible, and Kat then moved to New York, as she had always wanted, to study film.

Everything was perfect, and her relationship with God began to improve as well, since her beloved was a fervently religious man who prayed with her every day before going to sleep. He wore a thick cross around his neck, which he never took off, and at the end of the prayer he always performed the same ritual: he kissed the cross and then brought it close to her so that she could kiss it too. He taught her how to behave with people, and also about the harmful effects of anger, given the girl's aggressiveness.

He made her see how special her heart and her way of thinking were, and how different she was from other people — and that this was a good thing, not something to isolate herself over or feel strange about. Unlike other men, who were always concerned with showing the power they had — even when they often had none — he was focused on showing her the power *she* had, the great power she carried within herself. And so, the insecurity of an entire lifetime was shattered. The girl, who had already become strong because of life's circumstances, now became strong because of her own mental strength. Without intending to, she had joined herself to the only truly upright person in the world, according to her.

The man was responsible for major charitable institutions around the world — those that truly made a difference — sponsoring culture and sports; he was respected worldwide for his philanthropic work. Yet he lived his life with immense humility and fear of God; *"he was perfection in human form,"* the girl thought. The problem was that many others thought the same, and were very envious not only of the man, but now also of the couple — and this was the greatest enemy of the relationship.

Still, despite everyone around trying to prevent this union from happening, after three months of relationship the man asked her to marry him, and then love was consolidated. After that, it didn't matter how life was — bad or good — for Kat, life was perfect. With him, even problems seemed perfect, with the exception of her mother's illness, the only thing that robbed Kat of sleep. The cancer worsened with each passing day.

At night, while sleeping, Kat dreamed that she walked through vast pastures and untouched forests. She wore a white girl's dress — light, lace-trimmed — in a style reminiscent of 18th-century Europe. It was cold, yet the sun shone high; animals ran around her — deer, birds, and others — composing a scene that felt almost like a kind of dance, in which the girl danced, ran, and sang all at once.

Then everything began to turn white, white, white; the forest faded away and little by little transformed once again into the white room where she had long conversations with the *Voice*.

— I am so happy! So happy! — the girl said, still skipping about, now alone inside a room with no beginning and no end, only white. — I am so grateful, I am the happiest girl in the world! How can someone be so good, so wonderful to me, without ever asking for anything in return? Without there ever having been a single argument, a single misunderstanding? How is this possible, my God!? It is perfect, perfect in the most absolute form of perfection. Thank you, thank you, thank you — I never tire of thanking God every second; I think I will die of joy, and until my last breath I will be giving thanks, and for all eternity I will thank more and more and more!

— Finding you was a grace granted to him; you give him far more than he gives you. You mean very much to him — an entire existence, to be more precise.

— What do you mean?

— The man you are referring to was your father in one of your lives.
[Translator's note: the narrative assumes belief in reincarnation and past lives.]

— In that past life he was also a man of many possessions, as he is now, but he could do nothing for his daughter: you were stolen from your home while still a baby and raised by a very poor family who made you work day and night like a slave, and you died very young, suffering from the diseases and plagues of the time. This man spent the rest of his life trying to find you, and even after death he suffered greatly for having failed to do so. The lack of life with you led his spirit to total ruin and misery; he passed through many existences before returning to his normal course. You and he remained at different levels of evolution, which kept you apart.

The connection with you was too strong, above all else, and it was interrupted for the sake of the evolution of both of you, until he could understand that in the *"Planes"* things would have to be that way, as they were at that time. And that only if your spirit one day expressed the desire to see him and relate to him again in the same lifetime would that meeting be allowed to take place.
[Translator's note: "Planos" ("Planes") refers to spiritual planes or levels of existence in reincarnation-based belief systems.]

When his spirit came into this life, knowing that you would be here in the same existence, he asked that he might at least be allowed to serve as help to you, to support you in some difficult life situation, because his fatherly affection wished to do you good and care for you, even if only for a brief moment, a short span of time within the existence. And as it had to be, your spirit, by free will, sought his… You called him, cried out for him, and even looked for him in other people without knowing it.

Now everything made sense in the girl's mind, as she saw a film playing through her thoughts and marveled at every word spoken.

— You made a list in which you described the perfect man — the *Voice* continued — that list described all of his qualities, even his flaws. His only intention truly is to help and to spend as much time as possible with that dearly loved daughter, whom he was never able to be a father to.

The girl listened in silence, stunned by the truth of what she was hearing. Now she knew everything… and understood everything. Scenes from this life and the other began to surface in her mind, as if there were a projector running at accelerated speed inside her head, and the scenes were twins — sometimes appearing from this life, sometimes as if from the other. She replayed all those months with the man who had seemed perfect, all the things they had lived through and the way they treated each other, and she realized that, despite being a relationship between a man and a woman, it truly resembled a relationship between father and daughter…

When she woke up, remembering nothing, and without quite understanding why, she ran to the tiny drawer where she kept the old *"little notebook of wishes"* she had learned to make as an attraction technique from the book *The Secret*, and there it was — the list, with all the requirements.

As she ran her eyes over the items on the list, her eyes grew wider and wider; the resemblance was so overwhelming that, terrified, she flung the notebook away, letting out a scream. She called her mother immediately, saying that it must be *"some kind of witchcraft. I described him exactly months before meeting him, and I didn't even remember anymore. It's as if those words just appeared there! It's as if they hadn't been written by me!"*
[Translator's note: "bruxaria" is used here colloquially, expressing shock at something seemingly supernatural rather than literal witchcraft.]

In the months that followed, after learning all kinds of spiritual and life techniques from the mysterious man of the past — who had managed to become part of the present and was now her projection of an immaculate future — Kat learned about generosity. The man was extremely generous with the world and with everyone who inhabited it; he was always helping people on the street and encouraged Kat to do the same. He said that *"the more we give, the more we receive,"* that this was like a rule for attracting money: *"the more detached we are from money, the more we give, the more it comes. Money must be useful and must circulate, and when we learn to make it circulate whenever it is in our hands, the Universe detects the right current and sends us even more! The money we have is not ours; it doesn't truly belong to us — it belongs to the Universe and to the people who live in it, and to it it must return. The fact that I have a lot of money does not mean I should be arrogant or elevate myself because of my power; it means that the Universe saw in me the right channel, and that I understood the laws of money — that I value work and the worth of others, making money be shared and used in the best way so that all of humanity may benefit from it, and not just me and my descendants. That is the only function of money; whenever it strays from this, it will be serving only evil."*

Moreover, the girl had learned to respect men a little more, to see them as people who were also worthy, since she was beginning to understand that all her bad behavior and hatred toward men actually stemmed from her lack of affection for her father and her relationship with him. It was not a real condition of *all* men; perhaps it was not the real condition of *any* man… It was merely a problem she had with herself.

That man had appeared in an unusual situation and, looking back, it was because of her mother — who had become extremely ill — that he had arrived *out of the blue* to teach her about life. In just a few months with him she had already learned more than she had learned in an entire lifetime, and far more than she would ever learn for the rest of this life if he were not there, for certain. She was grateful — deeply, profoundly grateful — for everything. And she marveled at the world, which opened before her each day fuller of life.

While sleeping:

— And my mother — what are we going to do about her? When will she be cured? — the girl asked, already immersed in a warm session of questions with the *Voice*.

— Your mother on Earth continues with the illness that threatens her with death. However, although the doctors have said that she could die at any moment, her time is not yet over — and in truth, it does not need to end now. The illness came so that she might be healed; she had to fall ill in order to heal her soul. She needs to find her purpose in life. Fear became merely a consequence of her condition; she stopped acting for herself, stopped reacting to life… she became a lazy, purposeless person, without knowing why she existed, and now she places the entire burden of her purposeless existence upon you. She lives for you, idolizes you, and did the same with your father and your sister. She forgot who she was, strayed from everything that was meant for her, forgot that she was an individual and that every soul has its mission on Earth. She set hers aside out of fear and convenience.

The illness came as a result of her own *maledicência* — she herself attracted it many times; she prophesied herself to be ill solely so that she might place even more weight upon you, because for her not all the attention in the world was ever enough.
[Translator's note: "maledicência" here conveys harmful speech, negative intention, or self-sabotaging negativity, rather than simple gossip.]

If she thought she had found love — which was, in truth, selfishness — she wanted more than anyone could possibly give, for lacking the courage to build her own life.

Now she falls ill to see how valuable life and this existence are; she falls ill to see whether she learns to value the little time of existence she has left. To see whether, at least on the brink of death, the body reacts. She has been given a short period of time to discover herself, to discover where she began to go down the wrong path, where she stopped growing and evolving, long ago. If, within this time, her purpose is found and she returns to her path, the illness will be cured and she will return to a healthy life — but now living her purpose.

However, if she does not change and does not find the path, then this body will succumb and the spirit will be called to go *"home,"* so that it may there be treated and healed of the obsessions of Earth.
[Translator's note: "casa" ("home") here refers to a spiritual realm or origin, not a physical house.]

And death happens *"prematurely,"* because if, within this short time granted for correction — this second chance, one might say — the spirit cannot return to the path it should follow, it will cause nothing but unnecessary confusion for itself and for others, especially for you…

— For me?

— Yes. The greatest loser here, the one who suffers the most from having your mother's spirit still alive, is you.

The girl's face burned as she heard those words, words she had already heard from several mediums when she attended the sessions — even together with her mother — who was always scolded, but preferred not to believe it.

— You have devoted your entire existence to teaching her, and now you devote yourself to living for her. Everything you do is for her, and one should not be so *"devoted"* to anyone. Self-sacrifice, even when done for good causes, must have limits. You have strayed from your own path and harmed your own destiny in order to care for her, so that she might have a better, more dignified life, to help her in everything — yet you are not helping her.

You are hindering her in this way. For years, your mother's spirit has been disrespecting itself by settling for learning nothing, for not evolving at all, because it knows that you will do the work for her — that whatever the problem may be, you will always arrive with the solution. So she no longer strives in any existence; she does not evolve because of your excessive protection… This does not help her. It leads to her lack of evolution and makes you directly responsible for it, which will bind you together by intense spiritual debts that will follow you in this dimension and in others.

You must stop helping her so much, stop doing for her the work that should belong to her spirit. You deprive her of learning, of a suffering that she will have to experience again in a future life — only this time without you — so that she may truly learn from the situation.

That day, the girl woke up and had a long conversation with her mother. She explained to her about attraction, meditation, and everything she had learned in the previous months that had changed her life, in order to make her mother walk on her own legs. She decided once and for all that her mother would be cured: *"Every day I will call, and we will stay on the phone for more than two hours, until you learn all the meditation techniques so that you can heal yourself!"*

In the months that followed, coincidentally, she began to hear from all sides about the causes of cancer and its emotional and energetic roots, and that it was possible to cure it if the patient changed their way of seeing life, adopting a more active outlook — becoming a protagonist rather than a victim. The victim mentality had been attributed to people who suffered from the disease, while its opposite was attributed to those who had been cured.

The girl called every day and, for hours, tried to convince her mother that the cure for cancer would come when she found her purpose in life.

She showed her where she made daily mistakes, and little by little the mother began to change everything around her: first the husband, then the house, then her company — she removed from her life everything that no longer served her.

With this, little by little her personality changed; she was no longer that victim of life, the oppressed woman who pitied herself. Now she smiled, felt strong and powerful, like a strong, resilient lotus flower emerging from the mud to grow in splendor. Everything was going perfectly, just as planned.

However, the mother could not find her purpose in this world. She still spent all her days and nights sitting in front of the television watching soap operas, doing nothing for her own evolution or for that of others. *"At least now she's no one's fool,"* Kat would say when she remembered how people used to take advantage of her mother's submissive spirit, who served everyone and did nothing for herself. *"At least now she lives in peace."* She tried to comfort her own heart, and the mother cried in gratitude for Kat having given her a better life — now far from her husband and from everything that stressed her, now finally at peace, something she had never thought she would achieve in life.

— Now I wake up in peace and go to sleep in peace; it's the best feeling in the world, and I don't even know how to thank you, my little daughter, my guardian angel, for granting such a miracle in my life. I will be eternally grateful to you. You saved me and you save me every day — the mother would say, always tearful, in gratitude.

As happy as Kat felt hearing this, an immense sadness took hold of her, because something told her that her time with her mother was running out. And, like any good teacher, she blamed herself for her student's lack of progress. She took the blame upon herself, because even after several months of intensive work with her mother so that she might discover her purpose, this still had not happened.

And every day she thought she was very close, but then her mother would do something that took her back to square one again.

— … Okay, but *why* do you want to live? For what!? — one day Kat lost her patience and shouted at her mother on the phone.

— I want to live to see my grandchildren, to see your children grow up…

— No! That's wrong! You must want to be here for some reason that is *for you*, something of your own, that adds to your own existence. The reasons cannot be me and my sister, like it was with my father, and above all they cannot be something in the future! The cure for all illnesses lies in living the *now*! Worry and expectation about the future are the raw materials of cancer. You must stop adopting this way of living if you want to live. It's not enough just to beg God for healing — you must give Him a reason to grant you more time of existence among us. Focus on the *WHY*: why you would stay, in what you would be relevant! That's what you must focus on, please, Mom! Please!

The girl begged her mother, already without the strength to believe in the success of the cure, since the cancer was advancing fiercely while spiritual understanding remained stagnant — it had advanced a great deal, but not enough for a drastic change in health to occur.

On the other hand, at least all those spiritual treatments and meditations with *crazy mantras* that the girl had forced her mother to practice twice a day had impressively improved her energetic field and her mood. She hardly looked sick at all; her face was flushed and now always smiling. She had undoubtedly begun to live only after the illness. That year she had spent sick had almost completely changed her personality: before, she complained about everything all the time; now she only gave thanks. Before, she felt incapable of everything and wasted much time on criticism and silly dramas; now she brushed them aside as if they were nothing, because she was always aware of her short time left to live, and so she tried to enjoy it to the fullest, with joy.

At times she lamented to her daughter for not having listened to her many years earlier, when she had already spoken to her about the very same things.

— Why, my daughter?… Why didn't I listen to you before? I never thought I could be so happy in my life. You always told me, since you were ten years old, to leave your father and be happy, free, with no one to offend or disrespect me — that, with time, that situation could not do me any good… You told me so many times, and I was weak and did not listen. How I regret it now, for I am dying and he will remain there to harm and offend other people, because my efforts made no difference. He remains the same clumsy drunkard, without grace and without solution, continuing to offend and mistreat everyone, and now I die guilty of my own failures toward myself. I thank you eternally for having fought with me so much and for forcing me to leave him behind, at least in these last months, because now I have peace and I am happy for the first time in my life — and thanks to you. I know you sacrificed a great deal for this. I know you devoted yourself so that I would understand it, and how I wish my mind had changed sooner…

— Don't talk like that! I've already told you it's forbidden to say that you're going to die! What one says, one prophesies! And you are not dying! No one in this story is dying! You are living! And all my efforts will only be worth it if you live — if you go, I will be a fool, an idiot who wasted all this time for nothing. And no drama — because the doctors are saying that with each passing day the results of your tests are better! — Kat lied.

She lied and forced everyone to lie to her mother as well, including the doctors, telling her that the cancer was improving with each exam — and not the truth, which was the opposite. She believed that healing lay in the mind, and she knew that if her mother did not feel sick, then she would not be sick.

And in the final analysis, the doctors would attribute the mother's survival to the daughter's intensive psychological and spiritual treatments. For a woman who had been pronounced dead as soon as she arrived at the emergency room, one year later — like a walking miracle — she was still walking through the hospital corridors with a healthy appearance, without losing her smile or even a single strand of hair, while people who had arrived there at the same time with far less advanced cancer had already passed away.

The mother underwent constant surgeries at her daughter's Insistence, cutting out every possible part where the cancer was growing, without the doctors' approval, who considered it unnecessary suffering for the patient, since the cancer could kill her at any moment. Yet the fact that she was still alive was also attributed to the surgeries that removed the giant tumors, performed once every two months… It was almost absurd that that woman was still standing after everything, the doctors said, terrified.

Kat, however, did not give even an inch: she argued with her mother almost daily at any sign of weakness or tears, did not allow sadness or complaints, since she believed that sadness was a great ally of the disease's progression. And above all, she and her mother believed in the cure — they believed, and they did not allow themselves to think of anything different from that.

CHAPTER 9

Experiencing Hell

On top of everything else, a year earlier Kat had developed a health problem in her left breast — a terrible bacterium that silently ate away at the flesh of her chest. Without anyone knowing, except for her mother and her fiancé, she endured the illness in silence; but with an open hole 3 centimeters wide and 10 centimeters deep in her breast, it became harder each day to disguise the pain and the malaise.

With the help of her fiancé, the girl had already visited every specialist doctor in the world, and none offered a cure for the problem; they only suggested that she undergo a highly invasive surgery, which would leave deep scars and carried the risk of losing the breast. She refused to submit to the procedure, because just as she believed in her mother's cure, whenever she had time to think about herself she believed in her own healing — and would soon divert her thoughts to something else, except during the five times a day when it was necessary to change the dressing, because a fluid would seep out, sometimes yellow, sometimes green, and even brownish and blood-tinged.

And now, having become attached to a religious choice that was a rite of unrestrained gratitude for everything, she simply gave thanks for the illness:

“Thank you, my God, for this health problem; I know that with it You bring great learning, and I am certain that I needed to go through this now.”

However, the doctors warned her of the serious risk of death and refused to take responsibility for the girl’s lack of judgment, since she did not take the gravity of the problem even slightly seriously.

— You can relax, nothing’s going to happen to me, doctor — she would say jokingly, and she lied, claiming that the pain had improved a little. But the truth was that the pain increased greatly with each passing day, until her entire left arm became numb, from the shoulder down to her fingers, and she could no longer move it because of the intense pain. Even so, the girl continued to work as a model. Despite the healthy appearance of her face, her strength was being drained, and her health was already becoming weakened due to the strong antibiotics that kept the bacterium under control.

One morning, after yet another sleepless night because of the pain — yet still happy and animated by her perfect life — the girl thought, flooded by the feeling of passionate love that invaded her being, about the sublime relationship with her fiancé, which had now lasted almost a year. She was on her way to a doctor’s office in Manhattan; it was ten in the morning on a beautiful, sunny, blue day, with little birds singing and crows conversing.

In front of one of the city’s parks, she cheerfully climbed the stairs to the medical office when the phone rang — bringing her one of the saddest phone calls of her life.

— Hello? — she answered, already cheerful, recognizing on the screen the number of her fiancé’s translator. Although she found it strange that he was calling her, she felt happy, thinking it might be another surprise from her beloved, as always. *“What else could it be?”* she thought.

— Kat, it’s me. I’m calling on my employer’s behalf… He asked me to tell you that he will not be able to see you for the next six months, but don’t worry — throughout this entire period, and until he sees you again, he will continue to help you financially, and you will lack for nothing.

— What!? — Kat replied, choking, her saliva caught in the air that wouldn't come out.

— I'm very sorry… that's all I have to say. I need to hang up.

— What!? You must be joking! What kind of joke is this? I spoke to him last night! WHY didn't he tell me any of this? Where is he?

Kat then abruptly hung up the phone, afraid that something terrible had happened to her fiancé, and called his cellphone. The call went straight to voicemail. She called again — nothing. Voicemail for the third time. She called the translator back, now already very frightened, but still keeping the firm, commanding voice she had always had:

— Tell your boss to call me right now! — the girl said firmly into the phone. — Or to answer the phone — tell him it's me calling and that he needs to answer *now*!

— Kat, I'm very sorry, that won't be possible… He will no longer be able to answer the numbers you have. Where he is now, there will be no phone number for him to communicate.

— What are you talking about? — Kat panicked; now her features were completely frozen, she had no idea what to think about this, what to do. The only thing she wanted was to speak to the man she loved so much and be sure that he was safe.

— Haven't you been seeing the news?… It's everywhere. You should read it and then you'll understand — said the translator, his voice shaken.

— Yes, I saw the news. We talked about it yesterday, and he told me to stay calm because none of it was true and that this misunderstanding would be resolved!

That all of this was political business, that it had nothing to do with him, and that soon they would see that and everything would be resolved. He even said that he was very well and felt happy, that none of it had affected his mood, and that he was smiling and calm on the phone, as he always was!

— Yes, we all know that none of this is true, that it was a setup against him, to damage his companies and his name — but they succeeded. I'm sorry, I can't say anything more, I've already said too much!

The man paused for a second, and the girl began asking questions again, as if someone had spoken to him or made some gesture, or something of the sort.

— But no, wait, that can't be right — tell him that I'll move to his country with him, I don't care, I'll do anything to be by his side, I don't care about anything, he is everything to me!

— Kat — the man continued — he said that he can no longer protect you twenty-four hours a day, as he did before, because no one is trustworthy. He asked that you not trust anyone; he is afraid of what people might do to you in order to get to him. He said that you are at great risk by being with him, and that the only thing he can do to protect you is to cut off all contact with you completely. And he asked for six months to sort out all this mess; he said that in six months he will return and everything will be fine, as if nothing had happened. He said that he loves you very much… You know how much he loves you — we all know it. And he said that he is doing this not because he chose to, but because he has no choice… that if he had a choice, he would choose you.

Don't worry about anything — he left me responsible for making sure that every month a sum of money reaches you, and that you are well. Everything will be fine; you just won't be able to see each other for now.

— Tell him that I don't want anything. That he can give me everything in person when we see each other in six months — she said calmly, hanging up the phone.

After that, without even remembering why she was there, she went down the stairs the same way she had gone up: calm, yet dead inside, as if a breath from hell had invaded her soul and drained her life away. She was apathetic, without any emotion; she didn't feel like crying, or screaming, or anything at all. She could have sworn her heart wasn't even beating.

She walked back along the same street, through the same park she had crossed before, but now there was no sound at all. A funereal silence hung in the air, as if all the birds in the world had fallen silent — and even the cars, she thought; in the middle of Manhattan not even the sound of cars could be heard. There was a total and absolute silence, unlike anything she ever imagined she could *"hear"* in New York.

After walking a few blocks, she spotted a small Italian restaurant with a narrow door and decided to go in, thinking of sitting at one of those dark, tiny tables she could see inside the small, enclosed space that already made her feel claustrophobic. But the waiter, also Italian, led her to the back of the house, where, to her surprise, there was a kind of greenhouse — a garden large enough to hold eight tables. The ceiling was very high and made of glass; the small tables were finely crafted in an old French iron style, everything looking very authentic. A small staircase of just a few steps separated the space from the rest of the restaurant, with an angel fountain at the center.

"My God! I tripped in New York and fell into France!" the girl said in wonder, to which the young and gallant waiter promptly replied, with a strong accent: *"Italy, signorina — Italy. The restaurant specializes entirely in Italian cuisine!"*

Italy was the girl's second home; in all those years of travel and profession, the place that spoke most deeply to her heart was Italy.

She sat down on the chair, still warm from the heat provided by the sun shining through the glass ceiling, and with her eyes narrowed because of the dazzling light of the place — an extremely white brightness, yet another consequence of the glamorous glass roof, which by that point had already become her favorite kind of ceiling, since she saw richness of life in the sun.

The waiter returned a few minutes later to take the order and found Kat with an empty expression, still contemplating everything around her, perhaps with her mind a bit slow, still in shock.

— Have you already choo—

— You know — Kat interrupted, staring into nothingness, seeming to speak to herself — I've lived in this city for six months and I've never liked it, but I've been sitting in this restaurant for five minutes and it has already become my favorite place in New York! It's incredible! Where have you been all this time?… Ah yes, the order. I'll have… What is this?

— Oh no, ma'am, that's the wine list — said the waiter, handing her another menu, this one for breakfast.

— But you know what, that's exactly what I want. I don't need to look at the menu. Bring me your best Italian wine, a chocolate croissant, and… I don't know, something else with chocolate — a hot chocolate will do!

— Right away — said the waiter, smiling, as someone serving a happy person, for he thought that no one could be sad with a diet so rich in chocolate and wine right at the first meal of the morning.

Anyone looking from the outside would never imagine what was happening within. By that point, the girl had no contact with any friends, or anything resembling that, because between her mother's illness, her fiancé, and work, she had not heard anyone's voice for more than a year. She was apathetic, yet she already knew what was happening there: Kat's system reacted this way every time she suffered a very great blow. It was a way for her own system to regulate itself — to maintain calm somehow. But usually this measure was adopted only for a few moments, until true calm was restored and a solution was found.

“But how would I manage to remain like this for six months?” She wouldn’t be able to; she would collapse, she thought. She wouldn’t survive.

The wine arrived at the table, and Kat, looking at the glass before taking the first sip, thought: *“Wow… if this waiter knew how long it’s been since I last drank… If he knew everything I went through at home because of alcohol. If he knew the shame I feel when someone sees me drinking…”*

The girl had started drinking at twelve and stopped abruptly at sixteen, after realizing that alcohol had very little effect on her body. She could drink many glasses, all night long, and feel nothing — neither at the time nor the next day. At sixteen, she began to notice that when she got home intoxicated she felt sad and depressed, so she thought that perhaps the fact that her blood was *too strong* for alcohol was actually something bad, not good. Nausea, dizziness, vomiting, and discomfort made her friends stop drinking; it was as if the body had a defense mechanism to choose what was right. But since her body felt nothing, she saw alcohol merely as a sweet game.

Then she remembered her mother’s words whenever she came home under the influence: *“You have an example at home! You hate your father so much, and you’ll end up just like him if you keep drinking! I don’t need to say anything else!”* And she really didn’t — that was enough for her to have gone all these years without drinking.

But now she had no idea why there was a glass of red wine in front of her. Perhaps because she had watched people numb themselves with alcohol her whole life and now saw in it a hint of hope of remaining anesthetized… At that moment, that was all she wanted.

No one could help her. She couldn’t explain, share, or even describe that pain to anyone… There wasn’t even a *someone*. She realized she was alone — completely alone — with her mother on the brink of death, already waiting for her phone call so that Kat could give her strength.

“How will I give her strength now, if I don’t have a single fiber of strength left in my body? How will I give her what I do not have?”

It was still just a little past
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ten in the morning, and the girl was already reaching her fourth glass; shortly after came the fifth, then the sixth… She thought it was the perfect moment. Drinking the wine wasn’t really helping, but in a way she felt some pleasure every time a dry sip went down, cutting her throat — it seemed to open her glottis, which since the phone call she had felt as if it were closed. She was there alone, the only customer in the restaurant that morning. She thought she wouldn’t even have to worry about the shame of someone seeing her and judging her, but when she ordered the seventh glass, the waiter intervened:

— Ma’am, forgive my intrusion, but I must ask… are you all right? Is everything okay?

— Yes, I’m great. Why do you ask?

— Please don’t take this the wrong way, ma’am, but it’s not even 11:30 in the morning yet and you’ve already had almost a bottle and a half of wine in less than an hour. I’ve never seen anyone drink that fast, especially at this time of day… Are you sure everything is all right?

— Oh, that — she said, laughing as if it were nothing. — It’s nothing, dear, and believe me, I never drink like this. It’s just that today is a very special day, a somewhat atypical morning, you could say. I just received a very crazy phone call (laughs), with even crazier news, and I’m still trying to digest it, so I decided the wine would help. But it’s fine, it’s already time for me to go anyway — she said, trying to hide her embarrassment, now realizing how many glasses she had already had. — Now that I’ve seen the time, I really must go. Please bring me the bill.

It was a lie. There was nowhere she needed to go afterward; she couldn’t even remember her own name… She was defeated, in pieces.

She finally arrived home, and as soon as she opened the door she burst into copious tears, crying for hours on end — until her eyes were almost popping out of their sockets from how swollen they had become. When she realized it, it was already night, and she went looking for the sleeping pills that should be somewhere around there — remnants of the last long depressive crisis dating back to before she had met her fiancé.

Kat had always been against drugs and alcoholic drinks, but sleeping pills were a necessary element, since insomnia was cruel and made her go three to five nights without sleeping, which resulted in severe mood swings. Yet as she searched for the pills, she sadly remembered that it had been almost a year since she had put one in her mouth, and *"I was that happy,"* she thought, now with eyes blinded by tears. She took the first pill — it didn't help. Then she swallowed the second and, as had happened when she lived in Paris, she fell asleep.

— Hi, my love, come with me! I'm here to save you!

She woke up inside a dream that felt more real than reality itself. In a city of low houses with tiled roofs, like the small towns of Brazil, Kat was leaping over walls and rooftops, jumping from house to house as if she were a ninja.

In real life, her fiancé had ninja training and practiced every morning, always half an hour after waking up; Kat only watched, astonished, and found it amusing to see the flexibility and strength of that man, who was already nearing sixty. Despite his skill and his attempts to pass the maneuvers on to her, Kat had never been interested — not to mention the problem with her breast, which was one of the reasons she could only observe her beloved's morning ninja training sessions.

In the dream, however, it was different: she ran and leapt like a highly trained ninja in martial arts, her eyes narrowed with rage, with a single objective — to rescue her fiancé from the hands of possible kidnappers.

Arriving at one of the houses, in a room with a poor appearance — very different from those in which she was accustomed to finding her fiancé before — she saw men talking in a language she could not identify. The fiancé, near the bed, said nothing. When the men left the room, she quickly went in and locked the door, thinking of taking him out through the window, but he began to scream, calling for help from the supposed criminals.

She tried to untie him while at the same time telling him to be quiet and asking, in surprise, why he was calling for help from his kidnappers. She was confused, but continued with her plan to get him out of there.

In the dream, she was absolutely certain that those men wanted to harm him and that she was only trying to save him. The fiancé, however, was convinced of the opposite: he saw her as an impostor, someone who should be eliminated — yet, for some strange reason, he did not defend himself against her. With all the training he had, she thought, *"Why is he screaming for help? Why doesn't he defend himself from me?"*

And, as if she had the strength of a giant, she carried him out through the window and began jumping from house to house, running and fleeing, trying to dodge the shots that the henchmen were now firing at her. As she ran, she shouted:

— It's me! What happened to you? Don't you trust me anymore? I came to save you! These people want to harm you — they are not who they say they are — you have to come with me!

Yet he looked at her in terror, with the eyes of someone who did not know who she was.

— What happened to you? Did they brainwash you? Don't you remember me? It doesn't matter… What matters is that I have you in my hands and we'll be safe now.

Reaching the roof of an empty house with the lights on, and after more than half an hour of escape, she entered through the window and placed her fiancé — still with his hands tied — on the floor. Then the henchmen appeared from everywhere, even from the attic of the house, with weapons pointed at her. They quickly pulled her fiancé away and untied him, and at that moment she fled out through the window.

From afar she could see him speaking with the henchmen, as if he didn't know her and as someone who felt safe.

— I know you are very confused.

— Huh? — the girl replied to the *Voice*, which came from nowhere.

— I know you feel very bad… And please, I ask you for understanding.

Then the starry sky of the hot tropical night in the dream turned into morning, and the girl looked on in fear from atop a rooftop where she was hiding, watching the sky change color senselessly.

— Don't worry, they are no longer after you; this is a dream. And this is also not what is truly happening — it is only your worried subconscious playing tricks on you. He knows who you are… He knows very well who you are, and he thinks about you almost every moment of the day. He lied when he said everything was fine. For many months he has been trying to resolve this problem, which has nothing to do with him, but the highly capitalist system on Earth works this way: the more you have, the more people wish you harm. And he is a victim of the evil of the world. But do not be mistaken — this situation did not fall upon him entirely unjustly; in this circumstance, he deserved this trial and this lesson, at the moment it came. Everything that happens has a reason.

— Who are you?! Are you God? God, make him come back, please! Bring him back into my life!

— I cannot bring him back, because he never left it. He remains with you — believe that — and he will remain with you until your last day. He made the right decision to stay away from you at my own counsel…

— Then counsel him again! Without him I don't want to live! I would rather die than be without him! Please, tell him to come back and that things will return to how they were before — the girl begged, now crying.

— Daughter, we have already had this conversation before… Do you remember the Taurus?

When you were twelve years old, you told me **exactly the same thing**. Night after night. With the same supplication, the same sorrow in your words, and the same pain in your heart — do you understand now? If I had granted you what you asked for back then, you would never have met this man you love so much now. Believe me, I know what is best for you!

— No! No, no, no, please, now it's different, it can't be compared to what I felt when I was a teenager… Please, bring him back! I'll do anything!

— As I have already said, I cannot bring him back, because he never *"left."* He merely took a safety measure to protect you. There is nothing he can do about this now; it does not depend on him, and it does not depend on me either. None of this has anything to do with me. It is a confusion of men — like so many others — because of money and power, two things that do not even exist… The human mind is often a labyrinth without answers, because its actions and ideals are born from things that have no real existence. So how could I fix this confusion? How could I answer questions that already originate from a place without existence?

But do not worry — like so many others, this too will come to an end. The time it will take, and its consequences, will depend on how each person involved makes their decisions…

And as for your beloved: it is his good heart that condemns him there. He is far too loyal to people who do not have good intentions like his. He trusts too much in hearts that are not as pure as his, and this will cause him great pain — but we are working with him regarding this. And he too will be healed. But for that to be possible, he will need time now. His spirit suffers; his soul is sick with sadness and pain caused by the confusion… He is no longer the same, and he will not be able to be the same for you. And because he knows himself and knows this, he chose to distance himself; it was a wise and courageous decision.

He asked me to tell you how much he loves you and how much he cares for you, and to come tell you that he did this solely to protect you.

— Really? — the girl said, breaking down in tears, speaking between sobs. — He asked you to tell me that?

— He did, yes. He talks to me a great deal… He talks about you with me every night, fervently asking me to protect you and take care of you. He talks about many things, but unfortunately he listens to me very little.

— Listens very little?

— Yes, almost not at all. He makes his decisions on his own, as if I weren't even here. To give you an idea of how little he listens to me, he listens to me less than *you* do. And you listen to me very little! — said the *Voice*, jokingly.

— My God… then tell him that I will wait for him for as long as it takes…

— You tell him. You don't need me as an intermediary. An intermediary is only necessary when one soul is opposed to another, when two spirits hold resentment and are closed to receiving *"messages"* from one another — which is not your case. Between you, communication is free and happens clearly, without the need for any intermediary means of communication, earthly or otherworldly.

— But how so? — asked the girl, who began to cry copiously again.

— In the same way he taught you to do it. Right now, for example, he is sleeping and feels your vibrations; we could even say that he is here, in a way, because part of his mind is here. I am not referring to the earthly, human mind, but to the universal one. He will vaguely remember this scene tomorrow, as if he had dreamed of you.

— I don't want him to dream of me; I want him to be *with* me — the girl muttered softly.

— Every time you want to speak with him, in the way he taught you, all you have to do is firmly focus your thoughts and think the message. If he wishes to receive it, if his spirit grants it permission to pass, your message will reach him. He is a very wise man; his spirit has great experience in the cosmos and has already been with you in other lives. Therefore, he knows better than you what decision must be made now. Believe me, he made the right decision, and nothing will make him change his mind. Therefore, do not wait for him. Remember that this life is very valuable, that you have many tasks of great importance to carry out here, and that everything that happens in your life exists only to serve your purpose — the one that already lives within you.

— But what is it? What is my purpose?

At that moment, the *Voice* seemed to have disappeared — at least its vibration could no longer be felt in the air — and a great burst of light opened in the sky, as if it were a doorway to another dimension. Within the light, like on a television screen, was the image of her fiancé sleeping in a very comfortable bed, with a peaceful, serene expression.

The girl desperately tried to wake him, shouting as loudly as she could, but she was more like a tiny ant jumping and screaming toward the sky, doing everything she could to reach him. He was right there before her eyes, and she could not reach him…

Yet she forgot the most important thing: to imagine. Had it not always been like that in the world of dreams? One only had to imagine, and it would happen. Yes — I would have liked to see what would have happened if she had remembered that and imagined two gigantic wings and flown toward her beloved, or if she had imagined no wings at all and simply imagined realizing she could fly…

Would she have fallen here into the world of Earth, into her fiancé's bedroom? And if she had fallen there — what would have happened next?

We will never know, because she did not trust the *Voice*, nor even the silliest and simplest things, like flying in a dream — nor the most serious ones, like leaving her fiancé in peace, who had already been brave enough to make the most difficult decision of his life…

No, she preferred not to listen to anyone, and to suffer — to suffer deeply the suffering of one who is alone, orphaned of the *Voice*, who thinks they know better and ends up making a mess of everything. That was our Kat… And as for the wings, perhaps they are not for those who *want* to fly, but for those who *believe* they can fly.

The weeks that followed were marked by days and nights that always began and ended the same way, as if the girl had fallen into an immense cauldron of pain. Her mind remained in an impenetrable inertia, in which the only possible actions seemed to be crying or, at most, a low groan, when the sleeping pills began to lose their effect and the bottle of wine was not within reach. Wine and sleeping pills were taken as if they were necessary to breathe; it was not possible to open her eyes without running to one of them — or even to both at the same time.

As the third week was coming to an end, the date of a trip Kat had promised to take with her mother was also approaching. The mother, who had been recovering for almost two months from her last surgery, eagerly awaited the trip, which would be her first with both daughters and also her first outside Brazil. Kat had prepared a princess-worthy itinerary — before being struck by the great tragedy of the phone call — ten days through the most beautiful hotels in Europe, including spa days, as well as a visit to the Vatican, the destination most eagerly awaited by her mother, for being *"the most fervent Catholic I've ever known."*

Kat's mother prayed for at least three hours a day, and even with the illness and everything she was going through, her faith and devotion to God only increased. *"She talks to Him a lot, but listens to Him very little,"* Kat now thought as she watched her mother pray — and *"even so, she does everything wrong,"* she judged, without realizing that she herself was doing the same.

The girl, who had always been very good at giving advice and guiding others, did little of what she herself advised the *Voice*, and trusted it very little as well — which prevented her from following it and being happy.

The girl who had once been extremely excited about the trip now wondered how she would manage it, since she no longer had the strength even to get out of bed. She had already told her mother — and argued with her — about her new habit of drinking wine daily. *"I can't handle being sober,"* she said, confessing her suffering to her mother, without admitting that it wasn't only because of her fiancé, but also because perhaps, before long, her mother would no longer be there either. The girl felt nauseated every time she thought about that reality, and preferred to deny it to the very end.

What was happening was that this time the girl was revolted against the world. She didn't understand why; it made no sense in her mind. Why, after everything — after so much, after suffering so much in life — did this have to happen? Regarding her mother's illness, she understood it, since her mother had attracted it to herself. But as for her fiancé, she could not understand it. *"It's too much injustice,"* she thought. *"Why would God do this to him, to me? I was so happy and so grateful; our union benefited so many people, and with his work he benefited the world! So why, my God, why did the world have to separate us and destroy everything?"*

The girl's revolt was total, because it had been a political problem, which had no roots in anything good — or, as the *Voice* had said, had no roots in *"anything that existed."*

It was as if the whole world were against her happiness. Walking down the street, she saw happy people and imagined herself saying:

— Why can't it be me? Why can't it be with me? Why does everything with me always have to be pain, always tragedy, always—

A car sped in quickly from the right, just as she was about to cross the street, and almost ran her over, abruptly interrupting her mental lament.

Her heart raced, and the girl realized that she was wearing headphones, listening to music at a high volume, and that she must have been walking like that for many blocks without noticing and without paying attention to traffic signals — let alone to cars.

— I'd better go back home and never leave again! — she concluded, angrily.

And in those weeks of pure hatred and revolt, the *Voice* stayed even closer to her.

While sleeping:

— You must be careful; everything you think about intensely, you attract. Sadness is like a magnet for more sadness: the more you feel it, the more you call it in. And you don't need more tragedies, as you yourself have said. What happened, happened — it had to be. You must trust and let go… Your mind, especially, is very powerful; it became that way because of powerful fragments of life. Therefore, everything you think, you attract.

— I don't want to know! I don't want to hear anything! I *was* happy — happy and grateful — and the world came and took everything from me! What else do they want to take from me? Let them take my life already, once and for all, so that at least I'll have peace; I can't take this life anymore, because no matter what I do, I can never manage to be happy. When it's not my fault, it's someone else's fault; when it's no one's fault, it's life's fault — and now, when it wasn't anyone or anything, it was the world itself! The whole damn world is against me! It feels like all these awful people wake up in the morning and their greatest goal is to hurt *me*!

And the more she repeated this, the more such things happened. She went into a bakery and the baker treated her badly for no reason; she went to film school and her classmates banded together to speak badly about her — suddenly, everyone seemed to be against her.

— This happens because of the energy you generate.

What you say is not a lie — I understand you and I believe you. I am not here to be against you, or to contest what you say; I am here to tell you that you are right and to give you the solution so that this can stop — said the *Voice*, emphatically. — You must listen to me. It is *you* who are attracting all these small, unnecessary bad events, and if you do not change your behavior, they will become large. You may attract great tragedies that are not on your path and that do not need to happen. Why are you so revolted against everything?

— Why? Haven't you seen what happened to me?

— I have, of course. I am always here; I see everything — unlike you, who seem to see only what suits you on a given day. I do not; I truly see everything. And now you revolt against the very world and the very sky that brought you your beloved.

The girl was left speechless.

— Yes! Exactly that! This world, God — whatever it is that you are revolting against — is the same one that also brought you all the happiness, joy, and complete peace you once had! So it is only good when it brings you *"good things"* and serves you, and bad when it must go against your will? Remember that good or bad is something *you* decide; life merely follows the course it must follow, and suffering is up to you. All pain and suffering can be avoided — it is a choice, not a burden. Sadness is absolutely optional, and ends up being the punishment of those who do not trust.

Humans fear God, believing that this God punishes, but there is no punishment; the punishment is guilt itself, sadness, loneliness, pride — which are born from each person's actions. And yet you live and live and do not learn how to live! You continue to speak of dying, of death, of not being able to go on. Do you not see that this problem — or any other problem you may go through — is very small compared to the immense purpose of existence?

Do you not see how your spirit sinks into ignorance every time you think this way — every time you see death as a solution to anything you are going through, to any pain you yourself have created?

— But how can you tell me that *I* created the pain? I didn't want the pain! I didn't want the breakup — it just happened!

— For every ending to exist, there must first be a beginning. Did you want the beginning? Did you want to start? Did you choose this man to love? Then you also chose the pain you feel now. You are a very courageous human being, and that is why you evolve so quickly, but you have a tendency to blame us for the results of your adventures. And yet it is your own existence, your own choice. You could have chosen to love another man, and the outcome would have been different — but you chose this one. Just like every relationship that takes place on Earth, souls are drawn to one another and choose each other long before they meet. Sometimes encounters are sealed even in past lives.

— Every relationship knows very well that it wants to happen and chooses so… — the *Voice* continued. — The problem is that afterward there is weakness, and people cannot endure the suffering. The problem is that people forget what they are made of; who they are. They let the ego speak louder than reason and follow the *"great truth"* in which everything they expect for themselves must happen exactly as their narrow vision imagined — and if it doesn't happen that way, they refuse to live, they refuse to follow the course. They do not understand that because of this distorted vision they see only ten percent of the map, and that their attitude is completely misguided. Human beings suffer because they choose to suffer, because they serve their ego and choose not to listen to us. On Earth, everything is a choice.

Kat woke up feeling slow and groggy, as she always did. She thought it must be the delayed effect of the pills, but then wondered: *"How will I stop taking them? Without them, I can't manage."*

She thought it best to do what her mother had asked the night before and call her doctor to talk about the trip.

Her mother firmly believed that her cure was near, thanks to her daughter, who lied and convinced her that the pain was merely the result of the intense chemotherapy sessions she had to undergo once every fifteen days. So her mother said she would only travel if it were between one session and the next, so as not to interfere with the treatment. When the doctor was informed about the trip, he asked that the younger daughter contact him.

On the phone:

— Yes, doctor, I'm Claudia's daughter. I'm calling to talk about the trip. She told me you asked me to call.

— Kat? You're the daughter who lives abroad? She talks about you all the time, but I've never seen you here; I only ever see your sister.

— Yes, it's because I work and can never come — she replied, wondering whether that was really the reason, or whether it was because she didn't want to be there and see her mother in that condition. Going once a month already drained enough of her energy, she thought.

— I want to tell you that if you wish to do anything at all with your mother, you should do it as soon as possible, because she will not live much longer… I am suspending her chemotherapy; it's been almost two months since her last session because of the most recent surgery, and—

— Yes, she told me the chemo had been suspended because of the post-operative recovery.

— Yes, she needed sixty days to recover, and tomorrow those sixty days are up. As of tomorrow she is cleared to do whatever she wants and eat whatever she wants. The chemotherapy sessions will also be suspended, because it was decided by the doctors who care for her — myself included — that the sessions are only harming her and weakening her further; the treatment is no longer having any effect on the cancer.

Those words were like a sharp knife piercing her eardrums.

— No, doctor! What do you mean? You can't give up on her!
When she arrived there you said she wouldn't survive even a week, and a year and a half has already passed and she is still alive! And happy! I believe, by everything that is most sacred, that she will be cured!

— I know very well the diagnosis we gave, and I must admit that she is what people call a miracle. I, who do not believe in God, look at her in astonishment and can only say that there is no explanation in science for her case. However, I tell you, as her doctor, that there is no chance she will live much longer… There is none. I am very sorry. And as her physician I have the responsibility to tell you two things. She told me that you are buying an extremely expensive medication, among many other costly ones, but there is one in particular that I did not prescribe, and she is attributing the success of her treatment to it. I did not prescribe this medication precisely because it is so expensive and, in her case, has absolutely no effect. I know you want to save your mother and are doing everything for that, but you will regret it, because soon you will be without a mother and without money.

The girl listened to the doctor in silence, and her heart, which was already hardened, was turning to dust and crumbling with each word.

— And as for the trip — the doctor continued — your mother is very afraid of traveling, but as a friend I have already told her and I repeat it now: if you truly want to do something with her, do it now. Go now, right now! However, your mother told me it is a trip to Europe, with many hours of flight, and I must warn you that she is not fit for this. The reality is that she could die at any moment, including during the flight or during the trip. Therefore, go knowing that this responsibility — which is not small — will be entirely yours. The implications of traveling with a patient at this stage of cancer, with the family fully aware of her condition, may even be of a criminal nature, should there be losses to international companies and the like…

The risk is great; I only hope that you are prepared to bear the consequences this may bring.

Still silent on the other end of the line, Kat stared fixedly at a beautiful sunset that was approaching — red, presenting itself before the enormous glass window of the apartment, which was on the 29th floor. It was her favorite time of day, and now she wondered whether there would be favorite hours in any day after that call.

— I understand, doctor. And I would like to ask you, please, to continue with the chemotherapy. My mother believes very strongly in the necessity of the treatment, and she has told me several times that she has already understood that when doctors release patients from chemotherapy it is because there is no longer any hope and they are about to die… And I cannot allow her to give up now… As much as I understand the situation, and even though my own hopes have been completely swept away after this call, I ask you, please, to continue as before, without telling her anything. I cannot imagine how hard it must be for someone to know that they are going to die, and I will not allow my mother to know, until the moment when death truly arrives.

— All right… that is your choice. I will do it that way, then. And as for the trip?

Kat did not want to seem arrogant to the doctor, to say that he had no idea of her level of madness and that nothing he said would make her consider giving up the trip. She had already promised her mother, and if the hardest part would be dragging her own devastated body out of bed in order to take her, she was already willing to do it; the rest would be just details.

— Yes, regarding the trip, I will think about everything you said and will let you know next week about my decision. But don’t worry — I am a very responsible person. In any case, everything will be under control.

After hanging up the phone, she stayed there, without a single thought and without moving a muscle, for hours. She caught a fleeting glimpse of the sun dying and darkness taking over the room. When she finally became aware of herself again, when the first thought returned to her mind, it was already deep night, and she hurried to call her sister first, to tell her about the conversation with the doctor, about the decision to take the trip, and to make sure that her sister would not say anything to their mother — on that point, she was firmly opposed.

Right afterward, she called her mother, putting into practice her acting skills — as was customary in her life — telling her that the conversation with the doctor had been very invigorating, that he was happy she was going to travel, and had even advised her to stay longer, since the joy brought by the trip would be more beneficial for healing than a chemotherapy session. Her mother found this strange:

— How so? He said I don't need chemo? Tell me the truth! He said that, didn't he?

— No, Mom! Of course not, I'm telling you the truth! — she said angrily, leaving no room for further questions, and began to stall. — He said that patients who travel and get a bit away from the hospital environment sometimes come back better, that's all.

— The doctor wouldn't say something like that without a reason! They told me at the beginning of the treatment that my only salvation would be chemo, that it would kill the cancer before the cancer killed me, and that I could never miss a single session!

The mother was beginning to uncover the lie, and Kat could not allow that to happen — yet she also could not lie anymore. With the exception of silly lies in adolescence, she had never lied to her mother, and that situation was becoming unbearable.

— Mom, I have to go, I'm already late here. I called you very quickly just to tell you this — it's very good news! It's something to be happy about, not sad! Please stop being so pessimistic!

— I’m not pessimistic!

— Then don’t be! Everything is fine, everything is great! Take care! I have to run, I’ll call you tomorrow!

But the call the next day never happened. Kat remained on the couch, for who knows how many hours, staring into nothingness, thinking of nothing and with no purpose in life, as if she were an empty vessel. She didn’t eat, didn’t drink, didn’t move… It was as if all the functions of her body had stopped along with her mind.

Again, when the first thought invaded her mind and she became aware of how many hours, how many days, how many weeks she had already been inert, she thought it must be because of the sleeping pills: *“It feels like the pills are consuming my mind, something is wrong!”*

So, using her cellphone — still in the same position in her hand — she began searching the internet to see whether there were side effects like that from the pills. Right away she found answers to all her questions on the subject. She learned that studies confirmed mental lethargy as a side effect of prolonged use of sleeping pills; they also said that the substance in the pills was cumulative — meaning they continued to cause harm even long after use had been discontinued — and that they killed brain cells, potentially causing irreversible damage to the patient’s mental activity.

There were also testimonies from people who felt exactly like Kat: mentally lethargic, unable to perform tasks that required quick mental action, and who attributed this damage to the pills. Terrified, Kat then began researching methods to cure insomnia, and once again, on the very first click, she found videos in which treatments involving hypnosis were used on patients with severe, lifelong sleep problems and insomnia that had not been resolved even with medication.

"*It's me, it's me!*" she thought, and from that day on she began to follow the many hypnosis audios found for free on the internet, and then, almost as if by a miracle, she slept—now without needing pills, only the sweet sounds and voices of the audios—and she had very crazy, happy, and funny dreams. Although real life was a true hell, as she herself described it, after listening to the audios, in her dreams it was the opposite: everything was magical and brought pleasure. And it was like this, unintentionally, exploring the many hypnosis audios she had found, that a few days later she came across an audio in English entitled *Conversations with God* (*Conversando com Deus*). Listening to that audio, and without really understanding why, something began to stir inside her. Could it be possible? The rebellious girl, who had not spoken with God for days, who had been abandoned by God—or at least that was how she thought—began to cry, without explanation, without knowing the reason. "*It's as if I've heard these words before,*" she thought. Extremely interested, she wanted to know where that audio came from, and discovered that it was a book.

—An audiobook! How wonderful!

Kat, who never read and had refused to read any book throughout her entire life—except for Spiritist books and those by Allan Kardec that her mother had forced her to read [*translator's note: Allan Kardec is the founder of Spiritism, a religious–philosophical movement influential in Brazil*]—from which she would read one page and then skip five, ten, and so on—had never managed to finish a single book, not even one!, no matter how interesting the subject might be… Not even *The Little Prince* or *Harry Potter*, which her mother had insisted so much that she read. As for *Harry Potter*, she had watched the first five minutes of one of the films and decided she didn't like it. Such was her aversion to reading that her mother, much as she was a general, had given up; after many long years of trying, she had resigned herself to the fact that her daughter was like that, and would do anything—except ever read a book. That was how it was; and nothing could be done to change that fact. But this was an audiobook!

At that point she was already so tired that she could barely concentrate, and many English classes were canceled because of it. Doctors and everyone around her argued with the daughter for pushing her mother too hard. While people said she should rest, that she could no longer handle so many tasks the daughter had imposed on her, Kat was convinced that the more tasks she had, the less she would think about sadness and illness. And she gave her no breaks, always complaining and pretending to be furious with her mother every time she missed a swimming or English class; in the end, the mother complied with what she believed were her daughter's whims.

Nothing made the mother manage to listen to the messages of the book, and nothing made the girl stop listening to it. She had already listened to it three times and kept listening, and the most surprising thing was that every time she listened she learned something new and had the feeling she was hearing it for the first time. "How is this possible? If I've already listened to this book so many times, practically going back and forth through every paragraph, how do I still hear things I hadn't heard before?" She thought it must be something supernatural, since she kept her attention 100% focused on the words every time she listened to the book. She also listened to it to fall asleep, and all day long during all her activities, because she had learned from hypnosis audios that the mind processes certain learnings better when we sleep, and through repetition.

During sleep:

— I found a book! I found a book and it's amazing! — the girl said excitedly, speaking to nothing at all.

— Huh, I thought you didn't like reading — replied the Voice in a playful tone.

— Well, I don't — the girl laughed awkwardly — it's an audiobook!

— I know, I'm the one who made you find that book.

— You? What do you mean? — the girl replied, laughing.

“Who are you? I was alone in my bed at home, no one was there, and by accident—bam!—my finger landed right on this book!”

— I know, I was there with you. I remember.

The girl’s head started to spin, and as she tried to understand what the Voice was saying, she felt nauseous.

— I know how you feel. Things are very hard for you right now—so many things, so many tests—and you’ve been feeling weak. But you’re not!

And at that very moment, the nausea disappeared.

— How did you do that? And who are you? Where do you come from?

— So, we’re going to start again with unanswered questions… Why don’t we focus on the question that really matters to you, which is: “Who are you?”

— Hey! What a coincidence! A guy I was seeing—I mean, an ex-boyfriend—gave me a book with that title, *Who Are You?* —the girl said, laughing. —I never even opened that book. He said it was very important that I read it and that it would be very valuable for me…

— Yes, I know. It was on my orders that that book reached you—not only the book, but the “guy” too (laughs). Both would have been very useful to you in life. I remember the valuable messages I passed on to you through him; he’s a great listener… But you didn’t give either of them the importance they deserved. So, since you tend not to trust people—or anything—except yourself, I imagined that if I made you find the book on your own, and in audio format —the Voice emphasized those last words— the message would reach you!

— Well, it did… I’m actually amazed to realize how those words touch me and how I’d never thought about those things before. But shortly after listening, I forget everything. Isn’t that strange?

— Well, to tell you the truth, no. That sounds quite familiar to me.

— Look, I don’t know who you are, but thank you very much, then… Since you say it was you who helped me find the book, I thank you! I have to go now.

— Do you really? — said the Voice, in a laughing tone. — And where are you going?

And before she could answer, as if the scenery were forming while the Voice finished the question, a vast landscape appeared before the girl. She seemed to truly know where she was going, and from high above, over the clouds, she was visibly alone, yet talking with the Voice.

— That’s a good question. I don’t really know where I’m going, but I know that I have to go… — she said this and took off flying. Just like that, without effort, as if it were her natural way of moving, as natural as it is for a bird. She flew off into what seemed to be the sky of a big city, and after a few minutes she flew over many green valleys, which gave her a wonderful feeling, and the sign that read “Hollywood.”

She woke up and decided to send an email to the ex-fling mentioned in the dream:

“I dreamed about you. I don’t remember what, but I remember that I dreamed. I hope everything is okay.”

To which he promptly replied:

“I’m very well. I always think about you and miss you. The other day I was here thinking—did you read that book I gave you?”

Kat, embarrassed and remembering absolutely nothing about the Voice or the dream, kept thinking, not knowing what to reply. She tried to remember at least where the book was—in which country, in which house—and whether it was still among her belongings scattered across the four corners of the globe, or whether it had already been lost forever and left behind on one of her journeys through life, since it was tossed from suitcase to suitcase in the illusion that one day it would be read, something she knew would never happen…

“Wow, it’s been so long,” the girl replied. “Well, I ended up leaving the book at my mother’s house in Brazil, and then I never got around to reading it. I’m sorry.”

And then she kept thinking: “Who am I, who are you… who knows!” And she remembered that as soon as she had received the book from the guy, when they were still together, she had judged the title and gotten annoyed, thinking she already knew very well who she was. “I’m the last person who needs to read a book with that title,” she thought, finding her boyfriend’s attitude rather audacious for giving her that. “What does he mean by that?”

She imagined that he wanted to tell her something bad, to criticize her, and she turned purple with anger at the thought that he considered her lost, someone with “no sense of self,” reckless. Out of spite, she ended up getting rid of the book after they broke up. She donated it to some charity, thinking she no longer had any obligation toward it, since they were no longer together. But Kat had let yet another valuable lesson slip by — people leave our lives, but the lessons that come with them should not.

Right after replying to that impertinent email, she stood up feeling a bit dizzy and went to the bathroom.

— My God! she exclaimed when she saw her reflection in the mirror.

She stood there, staring at her face, as if searching for words to finish the sentence.

— I’m green!

That was the most obvious thing to say… Her face was thin, with deep dark circles she had never seen on herself before. Her skin tone really did look green, or perhaps her vision was blurred and she couldn’t distinguish colors properly. She didn’t even look like herself, and she wondered how long she had been there in that apartment, how long it had been since she had stopped living.

— I look like a corpse. My God, I think I am one!

She put her hand on her breast and made sure the bandage was leaking.

— Oh no— I'm not dead, I'm alive… Because this shit is still leaking!

And after making that darkly inappropriate joke to herself, as she sat down on the toilet, she thought:

— I can't end my days like this, alone in an apartment in New York, talking to myself… Making jokes to myself… It's way too cliché. And why do I keep talking to myself!? This is crazy! Stop! Stop going crazy right now!

Then, turning back to the mirror, she messed up her hair, which until then had been half tied with an already worn-out elastic, left over from the time when she practiced yoga and had a life at the gym — something now in the past, forbidden by doctors because of the problem in her breast.

After looking into her own eyes, staring herself down and searching for an answer to her misfortune, she said the first thing that came to mind, almost without thinking:

— It's this city, it's New York! It's this shitty city! Everyone here is green, everyone here is angry! Everyone here is angry at everything! Everyone here treats me with hostility! It wasn't like this in Paris, it wasn't like this, it's not like this in Europe! Yeah… it's not me! And don't you dare tell me that I'm the problem! Because I was very happy before coming to this shitty city that's given me nothing but disappointment! Yes, I know, there's the film school, which is my life… But I'm sure I'll find film schools just as special as this one somewhere else. That's it, it's time. I left everything in Paris to become an actress, and here, as an actress, I achieved nothing. They're fooling me again! (laughs) Of course—how did I not see this before? They're fooling me! — she said, referring to the modeling agency.

— I came here to be an actress and once again I'm just wasting a little more of my short time of life, which no one knows when it will end—it sounds very close to me… when I should be in Los Angeles pursuing my goal. Yes! OB-JEC-TIVE! I don't say dream. No, that word is for losers. It's too dreamy, too lofty, too far away; I don't have dreams, I have objectives, and they're always one step away from being achieved!

Then she remembered the teachings of one of Osho's books—one particular paragraph from one particular book that had changed her entire life, her way of acting and seeing life, when she was eighteen, and which she had taken very literally up until then.

— How did I not think of this before? she exclaimed, and, as if reciting the paragraph out loud, she walked through the sunlit apartment on the 29th floor, from where she could see Manhattan—now the hated Manhattan:

— Ask yourself every day whether you are happy. Do you want a way to find out whether you're on the right path or not!? Ask yourself if you're happy; if the answer is yes, you're on the right path; if the answer is no, you're on the wrong path—simple as that! And if the answer is no, then change everything! Your situation, your home, your husband, your country! Everything! Until the answer is yes!

Then she stopped in front of the window with her phone in hand and called the modeling agency:

— Hi, Shirley, how are you?… I'm going to move to Los Angeles.

— What do you mean? the booker replied, putting the phone on speaker on the desk.

— Yes, I've decided that I'll move as soon as possible.

Then a second booker replied:

— Huh?! What do you mean? Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind?

— Oh, hi, Michelle, the girl said, surprised that the phone was on speaker. **— I decided this is what's best for me.**

— Kat — both of them began speaking at the same time — **you can't do this, it doesn't work like that. We have to notify your New York agency that you're moving; this has to be done at least two months in advance! When are you planning to move?**

— On Saturday.

— Saturday when?

— This Saturday.

— This coming Saturday, two days from now?

— Yes…

— But wait—when exactly did you make this decision?

— Practically 30 seconds before picking up the phone to call you. I know you like to know things as quickly as possible…

The worst part was that the bookers knew she wasn't lying. They had been working with the girl for three years and knew she had done things like that several times before; she had even moved from Paris to New York in the same impulsive way. The difference was that the previous decision benefited the agency, and this one did not.

— Kat, have you ever been to Los Angeles? Have you ever been there at all?

— No, not yet.

— What do you mean? How can you move somewhere for good without ever having set foot there before? Do you have a car?

— No, I don't drive. I have a phobia of cars; I'll never be able to drive.

— There's no subway in Los Angeles! There's no public transportation—how are you going to manage?

— I don't take the subway anymore; I also have a phobia of public transportation. So it won't be any different there.

— You're going to regret this, I'm telling you… You're not going to like LA… Well, it's up to you. It's already decided, then, right? We'll call your New York agency right now and ask them to suspend your entire schedule there. If you have any jobs already booked, we'll notify them today so you can make arrangements…

And let us know once you're settled in LA so we can schedule visits to agencies there.

— Okay, okay — by that point the girl's head was already starting to spin again. **— Maybe you're right, maybe I need to go first to see what it's like, at least feel the energy… and then move for good. But I don't really have much of a choice. As an actress, I have to choose between New York and Los Angeles. If I could, I'd be an actress in Paris, my dream city, but the only ones who succeed there as actresses are those born French, so I'll never have a chance…**

— Yes, yes — said the booker, no longer even listening to what she was saying.

— Let's do it this way, then: I'll go there this Saturday and spend a week in the city. I'll visit all the agencies, and the following week I'll move.

CHAPTER 10

The angel who appeared to save the girl from hell

“Life knows what it’s doing and when to do it. It knows what to take away, it knows what to bring. ‘Unhappy’ is just a word to define someone who thinks they know more than life does. No one is wiser than life. Accepting this is a sign of intelligence, of trust, and a promise of happiness.”

As agreed, Kat went to Los Angeles, tried to be as happy as she could, and a week later returned to New York, certain that she had made her choice. Los Angeles was everything she dreamed of and much more—the weather, the people, the energy of the place; she had loved absolutely everything there. However, back in NY, cold again, without friends again, lonely again, with memories of her ex that wouldn’t leave her head for even a single second since that terrible phone call…

In order to distract herself, she decided to log into Facebook and reply to some old messages. It had been a long time since she had replied to acquaintances—actually, it had been almost a year since she had spoken to anyone—so she gathered her courage and, one by one, resumed contact, calling and explaining that she had disappeared because she had gotten engaged, but that now everything was over and she couldn’t give many details, though she couldn’t wait to go out and see everyone again.

In a way, it was painful to repeat that story, but at the same time it was very good to relive happy moments from before the relationship. Through that, she was able to remember that she hadn't been happy only in those last twelve months, that there had also been a Kat there who had been alive for more than twenty years before that person arrived and who had been happy many times without him — when not even the memory of him existed, when not even his name was present yet; her name already existed and was already making its own history long before he arrived. And that was very important to her, because the way things were, she felt as if there had been no history, no life, no Kat, no person before him — and that wasn't quite true.

Going through the old messages, she came across one from an acquaintance.

"Marco?" she read, trying to remember who it was.

"Aaah, Marco! Damn, so many unanswered messages!"

He was an acquaintance who lived in NY and who would now and then send her messages inviting her out. If she remembered correctly, he was a European she had met at the birthday party of one of the guys she had been involved with in a past she could barely remember anymore, back when she still lived in Europe.

So she decided to reply:

"Hi, sorry, I didn't see all these messages… I'm here, yes, but…"

When she was sending the second sentence, Marco popped into the chat like a rocket:

"Kat! We have to see each other! Where have you been all this time?"

"Well, I was engaged and…"

"Engaged!?! Hahaha, you're crazy! We have to see each other!"

"…Yes… Well…"

“Where are you right now!? We’re having a party here at home! Come over!”

“No, so, like I was saying…”

Marco called so they could talk by voice, and then Kat noticed the accent and remembered that he was Italian.

— Hi — she answered the call, still on Facebook chat.

— Hi! Long time no see! What do you mean, you were engaged? What craziness is that? You’re way too young to get married!

— Oh, yes… actually, it was already my third engagement…

— Huh? Kat, you have to stop! You have to stop marrying people! Hahaha! Come over to my place, everyone’s here!

— No, I mean, I’m really sorry, but I’m not going…

By that point, she was already regretting having started to reply to the old messages, and she remembered the reason she had stopped. It was exactly because of this — because of people in New York insisting on going out. They lived for nightlife, partying, and everything that brought no growth at all, at least not for her; she had grown tired of that reality some time ago.

— I fell into depression after my engagement ended and I barely started eating again… I’m still doing very badly — the girl said, looking at the huge diamond ring still on her middle finger, where she liked to wear it, and which now made no sense at all… It was simply a meaningless stone, empty of all the tradition it represented.

— What!? No way! I can’t leave you like this! You can’t be depressed because of that — said the 25-year-old guy, who, having lived in New York for about five years, had never had a relationship that lasted more than three months. Therefore, Kat thought, he had no idea what she was going through, and explaining it would be useless — even if it were just the beginning of the story…

Kat also had this theory that in New York nobody got married, nobody dated, and nobody respected each other. There were too many options for love to survive, too many people, things were too easy for any disagreement to ever be resolved. Why waste time fixing anything with a specific person if there were ten others in line waiting to start something brand new, something that didn't yet need fixing? That must be what New Yorkers thought… Too many parties, with too many temptations, for people to spend even a minute improving themselves, so that any conversation deeper than "Hi, how are you?" could exist. She had never managed to get past that with any New Yorker, but she had also never tried. She didn't need to, she thought. As clever as she was, she simply observed and already understood everything. It was another one of Kat's theories: **"Those who think they need to go through things to learn are wrong. I never needed to go through many mistakes to learn; I learned simply by observing,"** she always repeated.

— No, no, Marco, really! I can't go, I already have something scheduled on Thursday…

— No! None of that! I don't accept 'no' as an answer, we're going! I'll come pick you up at 7!

— No, no, seriously… please don't insist. Another time, I promise we'll see each other, I won't disappear for another year, I promise! — a lie; in truth, she had plans to never answer Marco's calls or messages again.

— No, look, let's do this: I'll send you the invitation by message now and you look it up on Google! Just look it up. You'll see, it's an incredible party, you can't miss it! There will be lots of important people and people from famous magazines! Look, aren't you an actress? Well, lots of film directors will be there that night.

Kat hung up the phone as if shedding a burden.

My God! she thought, trying to catch her breath.

She felt short of breath and claustrophobic; it seemed to be the beginning of an anxiety attack—another thing she had never experienced before. And once again she started talking to herself.

“My God… so that was it, then… That’s what I freed myself from all this time! That’s why I never replied to messages and distanced myself from everyone… Because I had discovered that they are not my friends; they just use me, they just talk without listening, they just want a model to spend the night with or to show off to their friends and pretend they spent the night…”

She thought about it for a few minutes, talked with her mother for a few hours, and fell asleep with her wonderful book, which made her cry every time, yet brought her peace.

The next day, with no idea whatsoever of what she had dreamed or what had happened during those eight hours she had slept, now calm and with free time—since for her agency she didn’t even live there anymore, she was already out of the system, so she didn’t even have work to worry about—she was getting ready to go to the beloved school on Broadway, Kat’s favorite square meters in the whole world. Then she thought about the party… For no reason at all, her mind had completely changed about that damned party.

She looked into the closet and, right in front, by coincidence (or not), there was a Cuban costume that Kat had bought for one of her character videos that her fiancé—now ex-fiancé—had encouraged her to make. She looked at the costume, which consisted of a long, shimmering blue skirt, hand-embroidered with crystal stones in red and purple, white and yellow, with traditional designs, and a bustier that only covered her breasts, a kind of padded bra entirely covered in red sequins that she had brought back from her last trip to Thailand with her fiancé.

She looked at the costume and thought with longing: **“Maybe it would be good to go to a party and feel beautiful again; lately I only feel like a zombie.”**

Without dwelling much on it, she went to class and forgot about it. In the taxi, however, she heard Cuban music and laughed at the coincidence (or not). At the end of class, while everyone was chatting, one of the students—the only one who was also a model—commented about the party. Kat realized it was the same one by the address… They talked about how they wanted an invitation and about the caliber of the guests. Then Kat thought: **"Maybe I should give my invitation to one of them, someone who would enjoy it more."**

In the following days, Marco flooded the girl's inbox with several crazy videos and photos of what seemed to be the latest edition of the party. **"It actually looks pretty fun."** But it was already Thursday and the girl still didn't feel excited about going to the party…

When the time came, Marco said he was on his way to pick her up, and so she went—without even washing her face, without a trace of makeup, and without even brushing her hair. She was literally forced to go, and so she went to the party. She just smoothed her clothes, put on the bustier—which now didn't seem so desirable anymore, given how uncomfortable it was—and went down to the street, which felt more like the South Pole it was so cold, even more so with her belly exposed, despite the thick coat.

When she arrived, right at the door, even before getting out of the elevator, a very young-looking guy stopped Marco, greeting him, and devoured the girl with his eyes. She, distracted, barely even noticed the guy. Two minutes into the party and Kat was already bored, wanting to leave, and when she realized it, that guy was staring at her fixedly, as if hypnotized. He kept coming up to her all the time and striking up conversations, and she kept dodging him…

She was on the couch eating with a little plate in her hand, alone, when the guy arrived and sat down almost on top of her.

— Hi!

— My God, boy, are you crazy!? she said, standing up and sitting down on the couch next to it.

— Calm down, come here! Sit here, I just want to talk, to know who you are — said the boy, laughing, standing up and sitting close to her again.

At that moment, Marco was walking by, so Kat stretched out to pull him by the pants, standing up and speaking into his ear:

— Marco, get this kid away from me! He's crazy, I'm telling you! Look at the way he looks at me!

Then the two of them looked back and saw the boy with huge brown eyes, thick eyebrows, a very delicate face, and a fixed gaze, as if he were asking for something and as if he were determined to get it. Marco burst out laughing, and even the bad-tempered girl couldn't help herself. The boy's expression was so sincere that it even dissolved her bad mood. Marco slipped away quietly, already convinced that he wouldn't get anything from Kat, in search of the many other pretty girls who were there.

Kat then ran off like a frightened cat and hid on a sofa even farther away, where she stayed. Later, the music began to heat up, and those wonderful Cuban songs started to feel inviting. Then Marco appeared out of nowhere and pulled her to dance. Among all the boys there—and there were many—she wondered why the only one who had had the courage to approach her was that boy with big eyes and a face that looked like it was asking for something…

But she was dancing now, and she only thought about the dance. The party, beautifully decorated, with many lights on the ceiling, and everyone dressed for the theme—the boys in white hats and suits and the girls with flowers in their hair and flared dresses—made her heart happier, she had to admit it. And it didn't even feel like she was in freezing New York, where it was always bitterly cold…

Suddenly, the small metal clutch bag opened, scattering all her belongings across the room. **"My God! It was mine!"** Kat thought, startled, bending down to pick everything up.

At that very second, the boy stood up from the chair in front of her.

“What do you mean?” she thought. **“He put a chair in the middle of the room in front of me just to watch me dance!”** And that did seem to be exactly what had happened—the boy was sitting on the only chair close to the dance floor, and he helped her gather the things that had fallen out of her bag. When she stood up, there was already another chair next to his, and she had no idea where it had come from.

“How did this chair appear here? One thing I have to admit—this boy acts fast,” and she laughed to herself, without him noticing.

The boy was drinking something, which seemed to be whiskey, and she, as much as she had avoided it all night, had drunk a few glasses of wine on the sly, because she was still embarrassed to drink in front of people. **“Drinking is for losers,”** she had said her whole life, and now she felt like one of them every time she took a sip… With every sip that went in, a percentage of self-respect went out.

— Marco said you’re a film producer and that you’re making a movie now! That’s so cool! she said, now desperately happy to have found someone who talked about anything that interested her.

— Yes, that’s true, but tell me about you… What do you do here, who are you, and where have you been all this time!

— Sorry, how old are you? she asked, already sad, on the verge of judging the boy.

— Twenty-one. What he didn’t say was that he had just turned 21 that very week—and yes, that mattered to Kat. She had a rule of never talking to men under forty; she hated young boys.

— Twenty-one! My God! You’re a child, a boy! she said, looking away and trying to catch her breath, already thinking badly of herself for talking to someone so young.

— But I’m the same age as you.

— Yes… but you don't understand. Look, I'm sorry, I don't like young boys… We can't talk…

— What do you mean?!

— Yes, I know, it's awful… I'm a very crazy person, you know, full of psychological problems… I can only like much older men, and I don't even know what I'm doing here. Well, there you go—you wanted me to answer your question, what I'm doing here and who I am, there it is.

The boy, who looked at her completely bewildered, tried to pay attention to what she was saying, but in truth he could only admire the beauty of the girl's face… and her mouth… Yes, his eyes seemed to have some kind of glue—they couldn't look away—but the boy pretended very well!

— Yes, yes… But…

— No, like, nothing else… Got it?… I'm here and I don't know what I'm doing here…

A huge wave of sadness took over her as she gave in to her first thought about her fiancé.

— You're sad. Why are you sad?

— I am sad, yes… very sad… — and a silence settled in.

She was thinking about her fiancé, and the boy was looking at her, thinking only about whether it was possible for someone to be that beautiful.

— I was engaged, she continued, **— engaged and happy… I was supposed to be traveling with him right now… The trip was already planned.**

— But what happened to him, I mean, why aren't you together anymore?

Suddenly the girl saw in that boy the only chance to talk about her sadness. **"Why not?"** she thought. **"I'll never see him again and it won't change anything—better for me to let all this out."**

Then something magical and impressive happened: she trusted someone—not to tell everything, every detail, but she trusted someone enough to tell him something. Without realizing it, it was already almost morning, and the lights in the house turned on.

“We’re still at a party,” the girl said, smiling, because in those two hours they had spent talking, the entire party had been reduced to those two chairs and their voices, as if the loud music were life’s greatest obstacle.

She felt light, as if she had talked with a friend she hadn’t seen in a long time. But soon people began to leave the party, and the desire was to keep the conversation going.

— Well, I guess it’s time to go home… said the boy, looking at the people leaving in a hurry, as if they didn’t even want to be there.

— Yes, that’s true. Why don’t we go somewhere warm, where we can keep talking?

— At this hour? We won’t find anywhere open now. Shall we meet over the weekend?

— This weekend?

— Yes.

— No… I think it’s better not to… said the girl, remembering that she had plans to move. **— I’m leaving this week.**

— Leaving? But what do you mean!? You can’t leave, I just met you.

— Yes, but I will. Everything’s already settled. I’m moving to Los Angeles.

— Then you can’t leave before we see each other again. When are you going?

— I believe next Saturday night or Sunday morning.

— Then let’s have breakfast on Saturday, at 11 a.m.! Deal?

— No… You have to understand, I’m always very busy, I don’t even have time to eat sometimes, she said—speaking a truth, as if she had been struck by a bolt of reality.

She had just remembered everything she hadn't done in the past few weeks and was now buried in things up to her last hair, not to mention school, which took up practically 24 hours a day, and she wanted to make the most of it before moving states.

— No, seriously, it won't work — she said, now pulling herself together, as if she had been in a trance for the past few hours, and thought: **"He's just a boy, what are you doing talking to him? Leave him alone and spare him an even bigger rejection later."**

— No. I won't be able to. Bye, it was great talking to you, thank you for the pleasant conversation — she said, already getting into the taxi.

Inside the car, she thought: **"It must have been the wine!"** not understanding why she had felt tempted to go home—or anywhere—with that boy, so far removed from everything she could imagine. **"So out of nowhere!"** she laughed to herself in the taxi, referring to the boy. **"That's why you can't leave the house, Miss Kat… My God, I'm talking to myself again, I must be crazy…"** And then, bringing her thoughts back to reason, she thought: **"Good thing I'm safe in the taxi and nothing worse happened,"** again referring to the boy.

That night she dreamed once more about her ex, in a ritual that had become routine: she dreamed, woke up, looked at her phone, as usual expecting to see a message from him, cried when she found nothing, and then went back to sleep until noon. That morning, however, when she woke up there was an email from the agency saying she would have a big job in New York the next day, and that if the client liked her, the job would be repeated over the following two weeks. At the same time, an email from the Los Angeles real estate agent said that the apartment she wanted was no longer under negotiation; unexpectedly, the property owner had decided not to rent it anymore.

— So it will be New York then… at least for the next two weeks, and then never again — she said out loud, resigning herself to the morning facts that had once again changed all her plans, knowing that there was no point in arguing with life…

At that point in her life, at least one thing she had already learned: that the only way to live was by becoming like a leaf and letting oneself be carried by the winds of life's course; well, or at least that was what she thought. But did she really practice that theory?

— All right, I'll stay — she said to the agency on the phone. **— Yes, yes, I'm very happy too…**

The days went by, the client hired her to work again for several days, and without realizing it, Saturday morning had arrived. As soon as she realized the day, she was surprised not to have received any message from the boy—despite the fact that she hadn't refused to give him her number; they had exchanged Facebooks.

It was then, at 9 a.m., that the first message came:

— Good morning! So, are we having breakfast?

For some strange reason, it was as if she had been expecting that message at the last moment, as if she had guessed the boy's behavior. But she didn't give it much importance.

— You really want to take this forward, don't you? — Kat replied.

The boy simply answered with a smiling emoticon.

— I don't think it's a good idea…

— But why? What's the problem with an innocent breakfast?

— Look — then, taking a deep breath, she decided to tell the whole truth. **— I'm going to tell you something —** she began to fire off. **— I'll be very clear: you are not my type, you never will be, therefore nothing will ever happen between us, other than idle chatter.**

— That's fine by me, Miss Torres, I don't expect anything. But at some point you'll have to eat, won't you?

The boy was right. Kat hadn't been eating properly for weeks, the pantry at home was empty, and she was starving. She would have to go down anyway and find somewhere to eat.

— All right, you're right, I really do need to eat. What's the best place to eat on a Saturday morning in this city?

She got out of bed, looked in the mirror—at her face still wearing the makeup from the photo shoot the day before, and at her hair, now with big, lively curls, also because of the job, very different from the naturally straight, slick hair without even the slightest wave that the boy had seen at the party. **"He won't even recognize me,"** she thought, making a quick bun and not even fixing the smudged eyeliner on her eye; she just brushed her teeth and left.

At the restaurant, the boy was already waiting, and Kat, as always a bit lost, messaged him in the chat so he could come get her at the door of the place.

— Hi! Wow, there you are! said the girl, completely flustered, disheveled, and late. With her hair still tied in a bun, she tried to control the side strands flying in the cold wind, though it was a beautiful sunny morning.

— Hi… replied the boy, dumbfounded.

It was love at first sight—or rather, at second sight. At least on the boy's part, who didn't know where to look, what to do, how to sit; he was just trying to control the uncontrollable desire to look at the girl's mouth. On his side of the world, where he had been born, it wasn't common for a man to show emotions; it didn't feel right to do so, it wasn't appropriate. Men who showed emotion were seen as weak.

— You have an accent! I'm only noticing now! Are you British?

— Yes, I'm Brit—

— Nooo! I hate British people! They're the worst people in the world! said Kat, remembering the few experiences she had had with British people in her life, which, incredibly enough, had all been very unpleasant.

— Oh, yes… but I've lived in New York for many years, so the accent has faded, and the customs too — he lied, just to soften things in the face of the girl's declared hatred of his fellow countrymen.

The two of them promised to stay there for only an hour, since Kat had other commitments, and so did he. But that wasn't quite how it turned out. The conversation flowed so much that it was already past noon, and the boy had canceled all his work commitments. Then he tried to convince Kat to skip class and go to Central Park.

— Let's go! It'll be fun!

— Hmm, I don't know… I think it's better not to, I have class and you have to go too…

— No, no, I can stay, I already canceled! Let's go! You spent the entire morning saying you only work and never have time to enjoy life! You lived a year in Paris and never went to the Eiffel Tower; in Rio almost your whole life and never went to Christ the Redeemer. And now you're going to leave New York without ever having gone to Central Park? You said your favorite color is pink and that you love flowers; at this time of year the park is flooded with flowers everywhere, it'll be beautiful!

Once again, the boy was right. And once again, a good argument. She had never done anything she could remember besides working. The only time she had enjoyed life a little had been with her ex-fiancé—maybe that was why she missed him so much, who knows…

— Let's go! I promise it'll be very quick! Fifteen minutes and we'll leave. It's not far from here!

— Okay! But — she stopped, once again warning the boy — **let it be clear…**

— Yes, just friendship!

— Exactly! Don't go getting your hopes up! Nothing will happen here! Except…

“…friendship.”

“Yes, I know, and I’m happy, I’m happy to be your friend; it doesn’t seem like a bad thing to me,” he said jokingly, trying to calm things down.

The park was beautiful—far more beautiful than Kat had imagined from the movies. It was spring, and the two of them sat beneath a cherry tree, heavy with pink blossoms.

“Is this cherry blossom? It’s everywhere!” she said, marveling at the beauty of the scenery, pointing to the flowers that were all around them. They covered the entire ground, and when the wind blew, dozens of petals danced in the air, drifting slowly in every direction.

And so the afternoon passed, in a conversation where they talked about everything and, at the same time, about nothing. Nothing concrete, and yet so meaningful…

The two laughed and talked about the people who passed by distractedly, when suddenly the sky began to cloud over and darken, and before they even realized it, it was already raining.

“My God! And now, what are we going to do? We’re stranded,” the girl said, noticing the heavy storm that was beginning and realizing they were very far from any shelter. That tree was the only thing that could serve as shelter within dozens of meters. **“What will we do?”**

“Let’s stay here; it shouldn’t last long,” said the boy, who by then was all smiles—after all, he had achieved what he wanted. Hours had passed and the sun had already set. They had spent the entire day talking in the park.

“I think we should go! The tree isn’t holding the rain anymore, and it’s starting to get very dark here—look around! There’s no one here; I think we’re the only ones left in the entire park!”

The crowd that had been there not long before enjoying the sun—children playing, couples in love—had all hurriedly left the place. The thunder and lightning were frightening as well.

The two of them then decided to run toward the street—Kat with the boy's coat over her head, still wearing the bun that had stayed firmly in place all day without coming loose, and the boy wearing only a shirt and freezing; in fact, they were both freezing. The city's weather gave no respite, and as soon as the sun stopped shining, the cold became bone-chilling.

"Oh my goodness, wait a second! I think I'm going to die of cold," said the girl, her teeth chattering and her whole body trembling, completely soaked and with her makeup all smeared. **"Wait, I'm going to let my hair down—this bun must already look horrible; actually, everything must look horrible! My God, what madness, this rain!"** she said, letting her hair down while still holding the boy's coat over her head.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. **"Wow!"**

"What is it?"

"Your hair! It's beautiful!"

"Oh, come on, my hair looks terrible right now! I haven't washed it in two days, and it's all stiff with yesterday's hairspray. My face too—I didn't take off my makeup… I never wear makeup, it's just that I really didn't have time to wash the—What are you doing!?" While she was explaining her smudged makeup and unwashed hair, she was surprised by the boy, who was moving closer to…

"Nothing, nothing! I was just trying to shelter from the raindrops under the coat," he replied, embarrassed by the accusations that were already about to come.

"Hey, listen! I told you! No kissing! Just friendship! I don't want that kind of behavior with me!"

"Yes, yes. I'm sorry, I swear I only got closer to protect myself from the rain, I'm very cold. Shall we go?"

"And go where? Where are we going? Do we even know where we're running to? It's rush hour now—we won't even be able to get a taxi!"

“Yes, I used to live nearby… I know a restaurant, a place we can go.”

Running another few dozen meters and laughing hard beneath a torrential rain that swept through the city, facing a wind that until very recently had seemed to be engaged in a romantic dance with the cherry blossoms—and now blew so furiously it nearly carried them away—they arrived at a hotel Kat knew by name, very luxurious, with enormous doors.

“What are you doing?”

“This is the place. Let’s go.”

“Of course not! Have you lost your mind? Look at me, look at how we’re dressed! They won’t let us in there!”

He tried to explain, almost without words, and went inside. Kat, however, stopped outside, in front of the door.

“Come on! It’s fine!”

“No! Are you crazy? Come back here! I’m not going through this—”

“Ma’am, please don’t stay out in the cold,” said one of the security guards, extremely kind and attentive.

“Kid, come back here!” she said, gesturing to the boy, who inside was laughing, chatting with the receptionist.

As she entered the hotel, she passed through a huge, luxurious hall filled with very well-dressed people, and everyone stared at her. She was wearing knee-high suede boots with high heels, a caramel-colored wool dress the same color as the boots—very short, mid-thigh, as was her habit—and a green faux-leather coat; to top it off, her hair was absurdly full and curly.

In the middle of the white-marble hall with its very high ceiling, which created a tremendous echo, a sharp, loud sound rang out from her feet every time her boots struck the floor.

Looking at the people watching her as if she were an alien, Kat—with her face purple from cold and embarrassment—burst into laughter.

“My God!”

“Look at me, I look just like Julia Roberts in the movie *Pretty Woman*, in the scene where she walks into a luxury hotel dressed like a prostitute and everyone stares at her in horror! Seriously, the scene is exactly the same!” she said, coming closer to the boy, soaked again, glancing sideways at the people dining in the restaurant— even more elegantly dressed—just ahead of the reception, with large tables and a huge, well-kept fireplace in the middle. **“Let’s get out of here, have you lost your mind?”** she whispered, embarrassed.

“Please, get me a shirt, I’m going to sit over there in the restaurant,” the boy was saying to the receptionist.

“Ah yes, sir, I’ve already arranged a wonderful table for you, right in front of the fireplace, just as you wanted,” the receptionist replied, very politely.

“Oh! Great!” said the boy.

The girl watched the two of them without understanding what was happening, still trying to hide behind her hair.

“You asked the receptionist for a shirt?”

“Yes, I used to live here.”

“You lived… here? In this hotel?”

As they entered the restaurant, all the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen looked in horror at the ragged couple arriving.

“My God, I can’t believe I’m going through this embarrassment! Help!”

“Darling, come here, let me take your coat,” said the boy, removing her soaked coat and stretching both coats over the decorative divider that rose between one table and another.

“No! What is this, what are you doing?” the girl asked, panicked, watching the boy hang the wet clothes as if he were alone hanging laundry on a clothesline in a spacious backyard—except he was bumping into everyone and brushing the soaked clothes against people eating at the neighboring table.

“Oops! I’m sorry, ma’am…”

By that point, the entire restaurant was openly staring and laughing at the couple.

“What is it—have you never seen a soaking-wet couple hanging their clothes up to dry?”

“Oh my goodness!” the girl exclaimed, and everyone laughed, watching the two of them.

“Here you go, sir, your shirt,” said the waiter, handing the boy a white shirt.

“Ugh, this looks awful! Didn’t you have a better one?”

“No, sir, unfortunately this was the only one we had. I’m very sorry.”

“Excuse me for a moment, darling, I’m going to the men’s restroom to change my shirt.”

“I’m coming with you! ‘To the ladies’ restroom,’” she said, joking about his accent and his gallant way of speaking, so typical of English culture. **“Well, I’m going ‘to the ladies’ restroom’ to see if I can fix this face, because I don’t know what’s embarrassing me more here—me or you.”**

That time in the bathroom made her think. Night had already fallen outside, and for some reason she had spent the entire day with that boy. She had even forgotten about the sadness over her mother’s illness for a moment—for the first time in more than a year—but never about her ex-fiancé… She looked at the ring still on her finger and realized she hadn’t talked about her fiancé that day, unlike the first time she had spoken to the boy at the party, when she had talked only about him.

“Wow! You took a long time in there! I even thought you’d left. And wow—you’re even more beautiful now! How did you do that?” he said, gazing enchantingly at the girl’s face, which now glowed, reflecting the light of the candles and the fire from the sophisticated fireplace burning to the right.

Kat had returned with her hair and face completely messed up; she hadn’t managed to improve anything in the bathroom.

“You’re so silly! There’s no fixing it—my hair is completely impossible and refuses to cooperate, and as for my face, well, I didn’t bring anything in my bag that could fix it…”

“So you didn’t do anything? But you look beautiful to me! Even more beautiful than an hour ago, when you left here to go to the bathroom,” said the boy, amid Kat’s laughter. **“I’m not kidding—everyone here was looking at me and commenting: ‘That poor bastard was left behind, he and his clothes hanging on the line,’”** he joked.

The girl just laughed.

A middle-aged woman came over to take their order.

“Which wine do you like most?” he asked enthusiastically, looking at the wine list.

“Wine? Oh, no… I don’t drink…” the girl lied, looking down embarrassed, remembering the many bottles of wine she had emptied alone during those painful past weeks.

“You don’t drink? But how…? You don’t drink anything?”

“No, no, nothing at all! I never drink.”

“But that day at the party I thought I saw you drinking red wine…”

“You saw wrong…” Kat said, laughing, glancing at the woman waiting for the order, her blood boiling with embarrassment at the possibility of being judged by the waitress. **“Please, shut up, I don’t want her to know, I don’t want anyone to know!”** she screamed silently inside her own mind.

“What perfume is that you’re wearing? It’s wonderful!” Kat said to the waitress.

“I was going to ask you the same about yours,” the boy and the woman answered together.

“What a delicious scent!” the waitress said, agreeing with the boy.

“Yes… I thought about that smell all day long. It seems like jasmine…”

"…there must be something of jasmine in that perfume; it's my favorite scent… I don't know why, it takes me back to my childhood, it makes me remember and feel good things."

A few minutes later, the boy was drinking wine and Kat was drinking water. Suddenly, the same judgmental sense she had felt in the bathroom mirror came back to her mind.

"Do you still love him?" the boy asked, looking at the diamond ring that sparkled, pure like a spark of something magical.

"Do I love him? I love him more than words can say… I love him more than anything… You know what? I need to tell you the truth—I'm not feeling well, I think it's best if I go home right now."

"But go home—why? What happened?"

"What happened is that, truly, I wasn't supposed to be here. I told you that all day long and you kept insisting that I stay! But don't you see? You're hurting yourself like this! I try to protect you from me, I don't want to hurt you—you don't seem like a boy who deserves that… You seem like a good boy and you have no idea what you're doing right now. I have to go. I appreciate the day and everything else, but I have to leave now!" the girl said, standing up from her chair.

"But, darling, wait—you must be hungry! Let's at least eat something and then I promise I'll take you home and after that we never have to see each other again. I wouldn't let you go home alone; at the very least you need to allow me to walk you home," said the boy, already signaling and asking the friendly waitress for the check. **"But really, I think you should eat… you must be starving."**

"Okay," Kat agreed, looking at the gale outside and feeling extremely confused. Her head was strongly saying *go*, and her neediness was saying *stay*… But knowing who she was and what she was capable of, she decided to lay everything out for the boy, when—without understanding why—a wave of compassion passed through her heart.

“I need to tell you something.”

“What is it?”

“Okay… here it goes, and you need to pay very close attention and be sure that you’re really hearing me and that you won’t doubt what I’m about to say.”

“All right…” the boy replied, looking very serious.

“I don’t like men.”

“You don’t like them? What do you mean?” the boy replied, laughing involuntarily.

“No, I’m serious—don’t laugh. It hurts me a lot to admit this, but it’s true… Over time I discovered that I’m a terrible person; I just use men. To be honest, I think I just use people in general. I’m an extremely lonely person, and I use men to make myself feel better when I need to. I play with them, I have fun, and it really just serves as a power game… The problem is that I seem to care, I’m kind, I have a sincere smile—and it *is* sincere, but it doesn’t last very long. A week, a day, a minute goes by and that huge feeling no longer exists for me. The problem is that it continues to exist inside other people, and then they end up very angry with me, because they accuse me of having used them. At first I didn’t feel like I did this, but nowadays, trying to understand my own feelings, I see that I do. I’m a terrible person, and now, in the very act, I can already perceive it and stop myself… I never dated ‘nice’ guys, for example, because I always looked for men I thought deserved to suffer. I used them to carry out my own revenge against my father, whom I hate. I always chose the most sleazy one, the most popular one, the one I most felt wanted to hurt me, and I got involved with him because I knew he would suffer intensely because of the way I am. And then I’d get tired of him and leave, feeling good for having taught a lesson to someone who deserved it…”

“I don’t know if I did this intentionally, I can’t really say, but today I understand that I did—and that’s one of the reasons why I can never be with good men, men who understand only goodness, because using someone like that would be contributing to a worse world… My heart was broken, used once by someone much older, who knew exactly what he was doing, and that made me a more bitter person forever. Therefore, I would never do that to another innocent person with a good heart… I don’t want to ruin you.”

“But, darling, this is just a dinner…”

“Yes, yes… And that’s always how it starts! It’s just a dinner, and then, when I realize it, things are completely out of control and I’m looking for ways to get rid of the person. In any case, you must not allow me to do this to you.”

“This?”

“Yes! What I’m doing here today… I’m using you, that’s all… I love my ex, and all I want right now is to be with him. I’m only using you to pass the time… I’m here with you all this time because I don’t want to go home and be alone thinking about him. It’s better to think about him while I’m here with you… But you are a human being. I need to understand that once and for all and stop using people like this—at least those who don’t deserve it. Now you should let me go… It’s for your own good, believe me.”

“Well, I don’t mind. You can use me as much as you like; I don’t feel bad.”

“What? You must be out of your mind… How can someone not feel bad about that?”

“It’s true, I don’t feel bad… After everything we talked about today, and looking at you, you seem like a great person and very interesting. As I told you, I feel happy to be here.”

“No, no… You don’t understand… I feel nothing, I won’t feel anything. All of this that I’ve shown you is just something strange—it isn’t real.”

“I’m here now and I’m like this; tomorrow I travel and I won’t even remember your name…” “Actually, my God, forgive me—I don’t remember your name right now! Come to think of it, I didn’t even ask your zodiac sign!” the girl said, realizing that she truly didn’t care about the person who had been sitting there in front of her all those hours, since she always asked everyone’s sign before even knowing their name. Shocked by her own lack of interest in the boy, she fell silent, as if there were no one there besides herself. At that moment, the boy said his name, and once again her thoughts were far away and she didn’t pay attention.

“…and my sign is Taurus,” the boy said, as gentle as ever, keeping a half-smile on his face, without seeming offended—at least outwardly.

“Taurus, you said? I hate that sign!” the girl said, referring to a distant past in which that sign had caused her great damage, and afterward became the target of a deep lack of admiration.

“Which sign do you like? I’ll be that one you like, then,” he said, laughing.

“It doesn’t work like that! My favorite sign at the moment is Sagittarius… but it changes depending on the time.”

“And why don’t you like Taurus?”

“No… Actually, don’t take it the wrong way—it’s a good sign, but I can’t bring myself to like Taureans when it comes to feeling desire… They’re too boring!”

“Boring?”

“Yes. No emotion, you know? They’re the opposite of me. In everything I take risks; I’m also open to everything, I always want to discover more… While Taureans are always fearful, always cautious, they don’t show their feelings and they’re very proud. They end up losing great things in life because they cling to silly pride… The funny thing is that it used to be my favorite sign! I was in love…”

"…well, he was my first great love in life, we could say that—a Taurus boy, when I was 12 years old," she said, laughing at the adolescent love, which no longer seemed like the one that had caused her so much pain for so long.

"Well…" said the Taurean, summing things up. **"I think I haven't been acting exactly like a Taurus with you, then… What you described doesn't really resemble my behavior toward you so far, does it?"**

"Wow! That's true! You've behaved more like an Aries so far! I'd even say you're an Aries. But you might just be pretending, and deep down you could be trembling with fear, already noting down my offenses so that later, out of pride, you won't speak to me for decades—while deep down wanting to run away!"

"Hahaha! Yes, that's definitely what I'm doing!"

Without realizing it, the two of them were already back to laughing and to the long, pleasant conversation about absolutely nothing, which had kept Kat there all day without noticing the hours pass. They say there's no such thing as a time machine, but that's because they've never experienced a meeting like this—where a Taurus boy was so pleasant that the hours became impossible to perceive and simply stopped making sense.

"What time is it? The last time I checked, before my phone died, it was 4 p.m. Damn, we've been without our phones for hours—people must be going crazy looking for us," Kat said.

"Yeah, mine died too. Ah, it must be around 7."

"You have a wristwatch—why don't you look at it?" she said, laughing.

"I'd rather not look…"

"Come on, tell me! What time is it?"

"It's… almost 9."

"Nine?! My God! We've been together all day! All day!"

“Yes, it seems so!” the boy replied, laughing.

“I think I’ve never managed to spend that much time together with someone!”

“Hahaha!”

“No, seriously, I don’t remember the last time I spent an entire day like this, just talking to someone… I think never… And especially like this… Don’t take it the wrong way, but I’ve never talked with boys your age! All my boyfriends have always been much older. That’s why I’m telling you—this is the first time I’ve ever spent so much time like this with someone. That surprises me, especially because it’s with someone I don’t even have plans to go to bed with! I hope you understood that—that you’re too young to go to bed with me… I wouldn’t do that with a boy your age…”

“Yes, I understand… I just think you’re very stuck in your head… You should drink. I’m telling you, it would do you good! Why don’t you drink?”

“I don’t drink because I believe alcohol is for the weak… I think I finally have to admit that I’ve officially become one of them. I didn’t want to say this—it was a secret just for me—but I’ve been drinking a lot lately. Wine makes me fall asleep faster and feel less…”

“I agree with you about everything. But if you’ve been drinking a lot, why not drink now with me?… You’ll feel better! At least have one glass with me.”

“Yeah…” said the girl, already convinced, and unwilling to admit that she didn’t drink because she felt ashamed—because drinking would be to officially proclaim herself a loser. **“Maybe I should have a glass or two, just to sleep more easily.”**

“It won’t be easy to go back to that apartment alone and sober,” she thought.

She still didn’t know why she had trusted herself to drink in front of that guy…

“Maybe because she didn’t care about him, maybe because he was too young and didn’t belong to any circle of acquaintances—there would be no one to gossip to.” Gossip was one of Kat’s greatest fears; she had a real horror and disgust for gossip and for people talking about her life—a trauma she carried from childhood because of bizarre situations with her aunts and also from more recent events. It seemed that the more she tried to hide from gossip, the more it chased her.

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It was already nearing midnight, and the girl was thinking about two things: how she would manage, once she got home, to cry herself to sleep yet another night, and how she would then manage to get rid of the boy sitting in front of her, since she planned to never see him again. He was not her type at all, she thought; he was too young for anything, there was no reason to see him again. She admitted it had been a pleasant day, but there was no future—so the best thing would be to end it there. She didn’t like wasting time on things that had no future.

“You were talking to the waitress about her perfume—I wanted to smell yours; it’s an almost magical scent…”

“Oh, yes, here,” she said, extending her hand so the boy could smell it, having no idea what would happen at the exact moment of contact.

When the boy’s fingers touched hers, it was as if her entire body were there in the tips of her fingers, and then there was a great shock. But not the kind of shock we’re used to when there’s a lot of electricity in the air and two people touch, for example. No—it was a real shock, like an electric current, that began in her fingers and ran golden through her bloodstream, as if it had color. The shock raced quickly from her fingertips, up her arm, until it reached her shoulder, when Kat managed to pull her hand away, letting out a scream.

“My God! What was that?” she asked, wide-eyed and frightened.

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Something truly supernatural had happened between those fingers, and she leaned back in her chair, staring at the boy's fingers from a safe distance, trying to figure out whether he had done something, played some trick on her.

"What was that? What did you do?"

"What are you talking about?" the boy said, laughing hard—almost bursting into laughter now—which really made it seem as though he *had* done something, or at least left Kat completely confused.

"My God! Seriously! Did you feel that? Did you feel it? A really strong shock! What was that?"

Now Kat looked at the boy in fear, not knowing whether he was laughing just because he was startled by her, or because he had in fact done something. He didn't answer… Maybe because he didn't know what to answer, maybe because he was thinking about what would be best to say if he *had* felt something, if he *hadn't*, or if he didn't want to admit that he had been feeling a similar kind of "shock" since earlier—since the moment his eyes had landed on the girl, back at the café door.

Kat now turned her mind back to the second of the shock, trying to understand what had happened. Everything had been very fast… She didn't know how many seconds had passed while she was enveloped by the shock, but when she came back from what seemed like a trance, it felt as though her finger had barely brushed the boy's—so she concluded that it was as if many seconds had passed within a fraction of a second. And with every minute, she grew more impressed.

The boy laughed out loud, perhaps now already influenced by the wine, but Kat was completely sober. If there had been any influence of alcohol on her behavior, it had completely evaporated from her body after the shock.

She remembered that, when she felt the shock, her heart immediately leapt and raced. And for a second—or who knows how long, and by what measure of time she could even be using now—she saw all the veins in gold, as if she herself were the shock traveling its path inside the body, more precisely inside her right arm.

Suddenly Kat looked at the boy, and there he was, smiling, with big eyes, interested in whatever might be going on inside the girl's head. And then she realized that her vision had changed as well.

"Your face," she said now, as someone looking at something extraordinary, not as someone who had been staring at that same boy sitting in front of her all day. **"Your face is… What's happening? What is this?"** the girl said, trying to calm herself.

The boy's face was now surrounded by a golden aura; it shone like gold, and the ordinary, unremarkable boy from before now seemed like something magical.

"Your smile… It…"

The smile seemed like something from another world, now bringing a kind of feeling similar to love. It seemed like the most beautiful and most perfect smile the girl had ever seen.

"What?" the boy said, laughing, as if he understood what was happening, and the girl thought, confused: *"Is he feeling the same thing I am? Does he know that I feel, deep in my being, that this smile is the most beautiful and illuminated in the world, and that this pulses inside me as surely as life itself?"*

"You… you don't see it?… There's a light, this light, right here…" she said, touching the air where the dense yellow light with golden edges covered the boy's face. *"Could it be the candle?"* she thought, moving the candle away from his face, but the light wasn't affected at all, as if the candle were extinguished.

"My God… it's beautiful…"

"What? What is beautiful?" the boy asked, still with the same pure, loving eyes, staring fixedly at the girl, as if he were feeling and seeing the same thing.

Kat burst into laughter, and the boy laughed along with her, knowing—or perhaps not knowing—why she laughed so naturally.

She looked at him now with eyes full of tears, as if she were in some kind of trance and as if time around his face had stopped. It was as though a greater force, from outside this world, were pulling her toward him—an unknown force. It was impossible to think about it, much less define or name it… It was inexplicable; it could only be felt pulsing within one's being, as if it were everything that existed in this world and in all others.

"I think… I think I didn't look into your eyes all day… I think now was the first time…"

They hadn't touched before that moment. Despite being together all day, the shock had been the first touch they had shared in this life. But what Kat was now saying about the gaze made sense… She *had* looked at him before, yes, but not like this—not with the eyes of the soul. Now the two souls were looking at each other, and the force made it so that when she looked at the boy, her mind stopped functioning, as if she had no control over any thought or emotion anymore; she simply looked in wonder at his face, her eyes illuminated by the rays of golden light that came from his.

"Let's go to your place…" she said.

Those were the first words to come out of her mouth, completely without thinking.

"To my place?" said the boy, unable to believe he had heard such incredible and unexpected words. **"Ah—yes, let's go!"**

"I mean… is it possible to go to your place?… I don't even know—if you can't, then let's go to mine."

"All right! Let me ask for the check… Let's go to mine, however you prefer."

After that night, the two of them were hypnotized by one another, completely abducted by an energy that had no explanation. The days began and ended completely out of sync—together.

It was as if the path of one— even through gigantic New York—always led to the path where the other was. Without realizing it, Kat had stopped crying over her ex-fiancé. In fact, she no longer had time; now she faced long sleepless nights and long days without thinking… only loving. The city suddenly no longer seemed cold, nor ugly, nor bad… Even the large piles of trash on the sidewalks, which used to be a source of morning grumpiness, now went unnoticed. The sun strangely shone more often, and everything was glowing; it was as if the streets of the entire city had become the stage for the love of the two of them.

Cars no longer crashed, children no longer cried, the homeless no longer fought, pigeons no longer got in the way on the sidewalk. No. Now color had taken the place of gray—of the city and of the girl's heart, who, already on the second night of love, continued to correct a painful mistake from the past, keeping the promise not to repeat it in the present.

In bed, as usual, the two talked with their faces very close and their eyes fixed on each other's eyes, which was their favorite way to pass the hours between one session of lovemaking and another.

"I'm addicted to looking into your eyes," Kat said, hypnotized by the caramel-golden iris—almost a shade of yellow—of the boy's eyes.

"I know! I feel the same!" the boy said, euphoric. **"When I look into your eyes, I have the feeling that I belong to them,"** he said, staring fixedly into each iris, as if seeing the image of his own reflection. **"When I'm looking at them, I feel like there's no world out there… and that nothing else matters—the world is reduced to you."**

And, without fear of revealing love this time, a courageous dialogue took place two days after they had been together for the first time.

"What is it?" the boy asked.

“Nothing… actually, I wanted to tell you something,” Kat admitted between kisses, beneath the boy, lying on the same bed that—though she didn’t yet know it—would become the destination of many future nights.

“What is it? Say it,” the boy replied, reading her thoughts—not only knowing exactly what she was about to say, but also sharing the desire to say the very same words.

“I love you.”

“Darling…” the boy sighed, unable to say anything more, holding her in ecstasy and at the same time in fear. People nowadays are more afraid of love than of anything else.

“I know you’re the proud type, and I respect that. I already understand that you’ve suffered because of love, and now you prefer not to admit that you love,” Kat said, as courageous as ever, on what was still only their second night. **“We don’t admit what we feel so that we can have a false sense of control, and a satisfaction that comes from not being ‘exposed.’ And it’s fine with me if you’re like that—what matters is that you allow yourself to feel and live love; that alone already makes you very brave. I, on the other hand, prefer to say it, because very early in life I learned a lesson: ‘It’s better to be called crazy for a love that is spoken than to lose the one I love because of a love left unspoken.’ After that, no matter what happens, whenever I feel love, I express it in words as well. Because I have peace in one certainty: I may never see him again, and I may lose loved ones for other reasons, but it will never again be because of cowardice in loving.”**

The boy listened, hypnotized, unable to believe the honesty of those words, with which he identified so deeply—because he himself was someone who acted with cowardice in love. Then, in an act of pure courage and rare impulsiveness, he decided to put into words what he felt.

“Darling, I love you.”

“I am completely, totally, madly in love with you. I no longer know what life would be like outside this bed… or when you’re no longer here. And that scares me a lot…”

Those words frightened the girl even more—she, who had always seen love as something trivial and ordinary, and who was now determined to make the boy understand that, in her mind, love had nothing to do with monogamy or exclusivity. She had already been too committed, too trapped, and now she wanted only her freedom. Yet love had happened, and she didn’t think she should have to choose between one thing and the other.

“Yes, but you have to understand—I don’t trust men… I don’t believe in monogamy, and I’ll tell you right away: I do love, yes, but I belong to myself, and don’t expect me to stay only with you. I don’t accept demands, and I want it to be clear that I belong to no man… And let it also be clear that right now I’m in no condition to have a relationship or to meet expectations. I’ll come here on the day I can, when I can. I won’t talk on the phone—I hate the phone… and I won’t expect anything from you either. And don’t think this will change in me—it won’t, believe me. I won’t ask what you do in your personal life, and I don’t want you asking what I do in mine… I travel a lot, and at the moment my soul longs only for freedom.”

And so it was: the girl keeping what she had agreed to right from the beginning, while the boy chose to see only what suited him, and little by little, silently, began to demand something the girl was nowhere near ready to give. Perhaps she only thought herself very brave, but deep down she was afraid… Not of love itself—which she gave and received freely, without complaints—but of commitment. She trusted no one, and someone who does not trust is not capable of committing. So perhaps what looked like a free soul drifting with the wind, like a kite flying, was nothing more than a soul with a wing broken by life’s mistreatment and, weakened, preferred to wander aimlessly with one wing rather than land and trust that someone might fix it.

The two barely talked or went out; they spent every day on top of the bed, trying to watch movies that never got past the opening scenes, then rewinding and fast-forwarding the DVD… In truth, they were really just trying to enter one another, with an irrefutable desire to live there forever. Kat, in turn, used all her tricks as a powerful woman with a boy who was, deep down—despite everything—still just a boy, though not too young to understand the power of energy and to unite with it. And so the two of them, with no choice, surrendered. Until, of course, as happens in life, one of the two had to step outside the magical field for a second, place shallow human rationality in front, and ruin everything…

Love is meant only to be lived. Not judged, defined, studied. With reasons or without them. Love simply *is*. And if something so inexplicable and so divine has become real enough to exist within you, what use is doubt and human analysis, when only a Higher Divinity could explain something so divine? And it does explain it: God's way of explaining love is by making you feel it, since for humans the only way to understand God is often through feeling… We do not speak the same language, which is why words are so often misinterpreted and end up being little used in this relationship. If you want to draw closer to God and listen to Him, pay more and more attention to what you feel. Feeling is God's purest language.

Almost two months later, in a dream:

Kat finds herself on top of a mountain, where the sound of the wind is very strong, yet nothing is felt on the skin; the sun is shining, and its warmth is not felt either. On the horizon, green-covered Alps can be seen, and farther in the distance some can be seen covered in snow.

The view was so high up that the ravines where Kat stood seemed to be in the sky, yet they were part of a whole, as if she were floating and at the same time connected to the ground.

“I’m going to have to leave him,” she said to herself, turning her back to the horizon, her hair flying in slow motion, without feeling the wind on her skin.

“Why will you do that? Think carefully! You love him!” replied a second Kat, appearing in front of her, also walking toward the summit, dressed in the same clothes, with exactly the same accessories and flowing hair, as if she were a clone of the first.

“I know I love him, but I can’t!” said a third Kat, now coming from nowhere, simply appearing behind the first, as if made only of air and doubt, yet carrying a heavy energy.

“You know I’m not trustworthy! And he loves me… he sees a conventional kind of love, and I’m not capable of loving like that right now. I love him, but I still love my ex-fiancé too! And what if he comes back?” said a fourth Kat.

“And what if he reappears!? Who will you be with? With him, with the other?” asked a fifth.

“With both?” the sixth joined the discussion.

“I can’t! I’ll break his heart!” said the first, already crying.

“Yes! You’ll break his heart the way your ex broke yours, and the way you did with all the others! Is that what you want?”

“He doesn’t deserve that! He’s only done you good, only given you love until now! He doesn’t deserve to have his heart broken by you!”

“Your mother is dying. You’re not ready for this right now! You need love, yes—but from someone who brings you security!”

“Yes… that’s true. He’s just a boy! He won’t give you what you need!”

“You’re right! But what about love?”

“I love him more than anything, and now—what will I do?” asked the first Kat, in the middle of the others, who were all speaking at the same time.

“You won’t be able to be faithful,” said a seventh Kat, stating the most controversial truth.

“Yes! You won’t be faithful, because you’ve just moved cities… And with the imminence of your mother’s death, you’ll feel lonely and needy… You’ll look for shelter, for someone who gives you security, or simply a hug—and maybe physically even more than that… And his arms won’t be here to comfort you. And you’ll do something you’ve never done before: lie, betray, and deceive!” said an eighth Kat, with a tone of voice that made her seem older than the others.

“No, no! I can’t do that! I can’t lie! I wouldn’t be able to live with myself!” the first replied, in despair.

“It’s true—we can’t do that! We can’t! That would be the worst thing, the worst life! And the worst ending!” they all said at once, hands on their heads, as if having some kind of breakdown. **“Yes! It would be the worst ending!”**

At that moment, the mountain began to shake violently; everything was collapsing. Like buildings being demolished, all the mountains on the horizon began to implode, including the one she was on. And with a tremendous fright, Kat woke up.

“My God!”

She was drenched in cold sweat, and now she was in her bed in Los Angeles, living a life completely different from the one she had had in New York. By now, the boy had endured all her disappearances from social media, and she refused to give him her phone number. And throughout all the days while she was traveling through Europe with her mother and sister, and also during the days she spent in Brazil, he stayed by the phone, waiting for a reply from her—which, when it came, was curt and rude, due to the stress of having to deal with the entire cancer situation.

Now she was trying to disconnect from everything that brought her worry, trying to live a new life—the life of an actress she had dreamed of for so long. She went three times a week to the new film school in Los Angeles, which wasn't even a little bit incredible like the old one in New York. After just a few days in the city, at her very first audition as an actress, she already faced her first dilemma involving her love life.

A casting call needed pretty girls for a TV commercial that would pay very well. When she arrived, Kat found many girls and boys and a list that already went past the number 300. A man, who must have been the casting director, began pairing people according to the list. Among the dozens of boys, there was only one—just one—who was very handsome and had something extra that caught Kat's attention.

"That one there—I hope I get paired with that one!" she thought and laughed to herself, knowing that among so many boys the chances would be minimal. The boy looked at her and smiled, probably thinking the same thing.

"For those who just arrived, it's an improvisation: a couple that loves each other very much is completely in love and talking on the couch at home. The first scene is a couple's fight, the second is the reconciliation. The text is here, and the pairs are these: you with you, you with you…" —he went through the names, pointing out the pairs. **"You with Kat—who is Kat?"**

"That's me," said the girl, stepping closer to the table.

"You'll be with this guy here," said the man, pointing exactly at the boy who had caught her attention.

"My God!" she thought, forcing herself to stay serious. *"I have to be serious and behave… This is work, it's not my personal life!"*

The boy had honey-colored skin and hair, sea-green eyes, and a sculpted, tanned body—a breathtaking beauty.

The two of them went to a separate room, and Kat took control of the situation to rehearse the scene, since the boy was just a model, not an actor. While rehearsing the scene—which included kisses, hugs, and sexual tension—she grew nervous, because she was feeling that tension in real life. And the boy, noticing what was happening, laughed, which made Kat furious.

"What is it? What are you laughing at? Focus!"

Then they went into the room, and the director loved the scene. He asked whether they were dating in real life and said it looked like the two of them really felt what was happening.

"No," Kat said promptly, **"it's because I'm a good actress, and he rehearsed with me outside. I'm also surprised and proud of his performance; I think he has a great chance of becoming a good actor!"**

When the audition ended, Kat—happy it was over—headed quickly toward the door.

"Hey! Wait!" the boy called, running after her, slinging his backpack over his shoulders.

"Hi…"

"Aren't you hungry? Aren't you going to have lunch?"

"Oh, I… I don't know… I…"

"Do you have another audition now?"

"Uh… no… I… actually I was going to look for a place to eat."

"Then let's go together!" he suggested. **"I've got a car here—do you have a car?"**

"Oh… no… I don't."

"Then I'll take you home afterward, okay? That way you don't spend money on transportation."

"Oh… yes… All right, I guess."

Ten minutes into lunch she had already realized that the boy was just as annoying and immature as he was handsome and attractive. So she decided to eat quickly, pay the bill, and leave. But inside the car she kept thinking… **"what if?"**

“And what if he weren’t snobbish and totally immature? What would I have done, and what would have happened? My God… I can’t do this to the other one. He’s not ready to understand something like that… He’s too young, and as much as I lie to myself saying he would accept it just fine, this conversation was settled two months ago…”

Talking to herself on the way back home, she then decided to call him and tell him what had happened—or rather, half of it…

“Hello? Hi, love! I miss you so much!” Kat said, ready to put him to the test.

“Uh… hi!”

“So, I just did an audition where I had to kiss a boy…”

“What? Kiss a boy?”

“Yes! Isn’t that crazy? And the boy was very handsome…”

“Don’t tell me that,” the boy interrupted, already hurt, on the other end of the line. **“I don’t want to know…”** he said, trying to calm himself.

“What do you mean, ‘don’t tell you’? It’s my profession! You know that’s why I came here. And speaking of that, what right do you think you have to feel jealous? Hadn’t we agreed we wouldn’t be exclusive?”

“Yes, but that was two months ago, and I thought you might have changed your mind… Why? Did you get involved with someone there? I certainly wouldn’t be happy knowing you’re seeing someone else besides me,” the boy said, his voice already filled with sadness.

“No! I didn’t,” —that was true; up until then she hadn’t—but she was furious to be faced with the situation she had most feared in recent months… confronting her own truth, the hardest of all. **“I didn’t, but I don’t want to feel trapped! I already told you that before and I haven’t changed my mind—not at all!”**

In the days that followed, just like the dream she had had on the mountain, similar dreams kept happening, and that same dialogue began to play out in real life. Now the subject was also discussed with her mother:

“I’ll have to leave, Mom, I’ll have to let him go. I can’t handle all of this alone… I’m not ready, and I’m afraid the worst might end up happening.”

“But don’t you love him?”

“Yes… But what if this is just a trick of my young mind? What if none of this is really what it seems? What if I’m seeing things? And there’s also the issue of him being too young… I don’t want to delude myself and waste time on something with no future… No… It’s better to leave him before it becomes more serious and I end up becoming a person I’m not proud of.”

“Well, then do what you think is best.”

In a dream:

Kat appeared lying in her own bed, as if she were awake.

“She says, ‘Do what you think is best, then.’ Does she know that everything I do is for her? Because of her?” Kat said angrily.

“We’ve talked about this several times,” replied the Voice, which came from nowhere, since it wasn’t heard with the ears but felt inside oneself. **“If you do it for her, then don’t do it.”**

“But how, ‘don’t do it’? And what will I do? Will I let her die without assistance and go live a romance? I can’t do that!”

“And why can’t you?”

“Because it wouldn’t be right!”

“But who will reprimand you if you do or don’t do this?”

“No one! No one will reprimand me! It’s not a question of being reprimanded or not. It’s a question of not feeling good. I wouldn’t feel good doing that!”

“Then don’t do it for her—do it for yourself.”

“Everything you do in this life, do it for yourself. It is by your own judgment that you act; it is for your own *‘feeling good’*, and in this case that also benefits her. But you must never think that you hurt yourself by doing something for someone else. That you harmed yourself by doing something for someone else. No—because you did it for yourself, you made a choice, and that choice requires a renunciation, which in this case is the beloved element… Even the renunciation, however, you chose alone. And everything else—the renunciation, the boy, the love for him—was and is all a choice that is yours alone. You cannot blame her. Guilt, in fact, is a hollow feeling.”**

“Hollow?”

“Yes. It doesn’t evolve anywhere. It doesn’t develop; it’s hollow. That’s why you shouldn’t blame yourself or anyone else. If you don’t like how you feel, CHANGE. Change everything, until your reality pleases you. Because if you don’t like this situation, you must go back to the beginning of everything—to what started all of this. To the core of what initiated the confusion.”

“And where is that? And how do I do that?”

“You. And you. And since you are the beginning of everything you like and don’t like in your life situation, it is very easy to succeed. In fact, it is only possible to succeed in all matters of life because the answer, the path, and the way to change is—and always will be—YOU.”

The girl fell silent to listen to the Voice, because that conversation deeply interested her. Now, sitting on the bed, she only listened.

“You don’t like where you are right now in your life. You see yourself as desperate, and, as is human custom, you now blame others. You blame your mother for being ill and needing full-time care; you blame the boy you love for feeling jealous and making you feel unsettled for not fitting into his reality—though you would feel the same as he does if the roles were reversed… You now find yourself lost in your own confusion of values and desires, because the two collide, yet neither serves your reality.”

“Yes! But this issue was discussed at the beginning of the relationship. Well—relationship, no, because it isn’t one, nor ever was! In fact, there isn’t any. It was he who made me think that way! I said from the beginning that I didn’t want any relationship.”

“People don’t stop feeling just because you impose that they shouldn’t. He feels, and in the same way that you think you have no ‘fault’ in feeling, even feelings only happen because they are allowed—and everything in life has a reason to be, but everything that *is* is also a human choice. Can you understand that?”

“Wait… I don’t think so… Everything is so confusing.”

“The boy, in turn, also loves you because through a set of decisions and paths taken in this life and in others, he is drawn to you and sees in you something that completes him—not in being, because being is already complete, but in the earthly sensation of feeling complete. And it was indeed foreseen that this would happen at this moment, exactly as it did, just as it is for everything. But that doesn’t mean the choice wasn’t his—and yours as well…”

“You make him see things he didn’t see while he was alone, but those things were already there. That’s why the two of you don’t *need* to stay together, but feel that you do, because you chose it that way—you chose to see beautiful things when one appeared in the life of the other… That vision, too, was a matter of choice, just as you could have made the same choice and seen the same beautiful things even without one being in the other’s life. At the moment, the choice to be together has made the situation more convenient for both, until it is no longer convenient and one of you chooses to see, feel, and think other things. That’s how so-called ‘relationships’ begin and end on Earth. But souls continue to relate forever…”

The girl was confused. The Voice was saying many things about many subjects, and it was difficult to keep up with everything.

She spoke quickly,

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as if she were speaking to something more capable than a human mind—perhaps a computer or an electronic device that computed and recorded everything at the speed of light—unlike the other times she had spoken to her. The Voice, as usual, felt male, and its intonation changed, as did its timbre, sometimes seeming like a younger person, sometimes someone more mature, and at times it wasn't possible to feel anything at all beyond the MESSAGES, which simply sprang into the mind without sound.

"Wait… so," said the girl, trying to slow the Voice down and organize her own thoughts before continuing, but it was now running over her questions.

"…So, if you don't like the situation you're living in today," said the Voice, returning to the girl's very first thought, as if it were following what came to her mind even before the thought had fully formed, **"you must change what you are. You fell in love with this specific boy because you are a specific way. If you don't like the fact that you are now in doubt, if you can't see advantage either in renunciation or in choice, then you must change the way you think and the way you are—everything from the beginning…"**

"But how can I do that? I can't go back in time and do everything from the beginning!"

"Time is just another illusion. Time does not exist. The beginning will be wherever you choose it to be. Today, right now—if you decide that this is the beginning and decide to change everything, so it will be, and everything will be done and rewritten according to the new choices. Human beings were given the condition of God, in which each one creates their own life and has the capacity to control space and time. They do not do so because, deep down, they do not believe they can. And if they do believe, they fear the responsibility that comes with the immense condition of God."

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“If you could change everything that is called destiny—the path—so that now everything would be different, would you also give up the wonders you lived in the past month? Would you be willing to give up having lived happiness in order to erase from your path now this doubt and this anguish of having to decide?”

To decide is such a great power that every human being would like to have it, but does not, because of fear—because with it comes immense responsibility. And so people prefer to attribute this task to God, who, in the human conception, is something above them, something of unattainable competence and position.

Kat woke up even more confused. She didn’t remember anything she had dreamed, but throughout that entire day she couldn’t do something simple that she used to do with such ease: make decisions. She realized something was wrong, noticing that she had been dealing with this problem for quite some time—she didn’t know how to decide. It must have been because her whole life she had made decisions based on blaming others, telling herself she had to decide that way because such-and-such person or situation indirectly forced her into it; nothing was ever her fault—and if it was, she quickly found a way to change the culprit, because she didn’t know how to deal with guilt.

Now, however, something inside her head told her it couldn’t be that way anymore; everyday situations, audios, signs, and strangely even the voices of the people she crossed paths with during the day all said the same thing… It was as if it were a symphony independent of the ears’ will, playing nonstop, and no matter how hard she tried, her unconscious could no longer silence it.

“The truth, once it comes to awareness, can no longer be ignored.”

In the days that followed, the boy’s actions and loving behavior became even more intense. And with that, the decision to end everything with him became increasingly imminent. In truth, that decision had already been made long ago, even before everything began, but it had been masked by a momentary need for love caused by the emptiness left by the fiancé’s departure and the constant idea of losing her mother.

That's why now, with every call, every message from the boy, every gesture of love, the irritation inside Kat grew. She no longer saw anything magical or supernatural in him; she had already forgotten everything she had felt on the first day, and on all the others they had spent together. She had even forgotten to feel at least gratitude, failing to see that without him that moment of loss would have been far more painful and unbearable—that he had in fact come like an angel to take all the pain away. No—she saw nothing now. She was fully determined in the arrogance of her decision, which was followed by the decision to change states. *"New city, everything new,"* was an old thought that had been circling her mind long before that whole love story ever happened; it came from the fear of not wanting to get attached to anyone or anything… For in her mind, the certainty that attachment and pain were the same thing was the only one she knew.

She then tried to break up with the boy by phone several times, and several times he wouldn't let her finish the sentence… He said he didn't want to hear that and that she was mistaken. She did try… She tried to end it, and didn't end it for good because, as we already know, lately she had developed the habit of waiting for other people to decide for her, so she wouldn't have to take responsibility. The fear of responsibility for the decision had grown so great that she began answering the phone harshly and saying things the boy hated just to see if he would lose his admiration and love for her. She thought: *"If I managed to make him fall in love with me, then I can also make him stop liking me,"* forgetting that the first part of that sentence had been possible precisely because it had happened naturally, without forcing it… Not like now, when she wanted something by force and manipulated another person to help her achieve her aim.

She had even tried to use the truth against herself in the middle of all that madness; one day, when the boy was in Los Angeles, in an attempt to end things with him, she said she felt the need to get married, to start a family, because if her mother died there would be no one left. Consciously or not, she was telling the truth—but the result was not what she expected:

"I need to marry someone, get engaged, to have a sense of commitment like before. Maybe that's what's missing in my life right now, to feel safer and happier," said the girl, lying in bed, holding the boy, expecting him to understand that there, in that life and in those plans, there was no longer any space for him—because he was too young and had known her for too short a time to possibly be the person she was referring to in that hypothesis.

"Well… I could marry you," the boy replied, understanding absolutely nothing of what the girl meant by that conversation—or perhaps understanding it all too well…

"Huh? No! I wasn't referring to you! I mean… you're too young to get married. And we've known each other for such a short time! You've only known me for two months—how can you want to marry me?"

"All right, then I wouldn't marry you… You're right, we're still very young and we've known each other for very little time, but I would get engaged to you now. We could have a ceremony and you'd wear a ring—would you feel safer that way?"

The girl now couldn't believe what she was hearing. His love was truly blind. She was astonished by his blindness—for not even being able to discern what she had just said, and also for having proposed marriage. She was stunned, impressed, but at the same time burdened with having to find a new excuse.

"No! Imagine… you can't marry me… Let's be realistic—our families are far too different! I'm a model and you…"

"…well, you're rich! Your family paid for a prince's boarding school for you in London your whole life—imagine you walking into a room now, full of crystal chandeliers, where your parents and your brilliant sister are sitting on a French-fabric sofa, and announcing: 'Mom, Dad, I'm engaged, and she's a lingerie model.' Imagine that scene!"
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The two of them burst out laughing.

"My parents wouldn't be surprised. Not with me! I've always been rebellious and contrarian about everything. They'd thank God that I'd found a woman as spectacular as you. They'd truly be relieved—I'm sure they expect something far worse than a model. But it doesn't matter what you are; you're a very dignified person and extremely intelligent…"

Intelligent, yes—but she still couldn't come up with a formula to end things with him.

"Yes… but that's not all!" Kat said, interrupting him.

"You were born very rich, and I grew up in a favela. I don't have the same concept of family or everyday life that you do. There's no way this could work… At best, if I were to marry someone rich, I'd have to be with someone who grew up poor and became rich later. Only that kind of person knows how to value life and everything they have, and only that kind of person will work out with me… as it has until now."

Now she had moved from half-truths to full truths; that was what she really thought. As much as she loved him, this was one of the things that led her to decide not to be with him anymore. After coming out of the hypnotic phase of love, during the day she observed behaviors in him that she judged to be arrogant and lacking in solidarity, and she attributed that to his opulent childhood and to desires fulfilled without struggle. And then she compared him to her ex-fiancé, who—despite worldwide financial success—had been born poor and faced all the difficulties and prejudices similar to those Kat herself had suffered. And therefore he, and anyone else with the same background, automatically became more eligible to marry her than the boy lying in bed beside her.

And so she continued daily with her plan of *de-falling-out-of-love*, through efforts to make the boy lose his admiration for her, believing that this would make it easier to decide and move on without him: *"If he doesn't want me, then I won't have a choice—and without a choice, there's no decision to make."* She based this on her past relationships, which had been ended by her boyfriends, suffered through for a few days and then followed by happy days, motivated by the fact that the decision hadn't been hers. Even if, after a week, the boyfriend came back regretful and with a bleeding heart, it didn't matter; what mattered was that the decision hadn't been hers, and therefore it could be thrown in his face and used to cause pain and regret as many times as needed, for her own senseless pleasure.

That's why now she felt so much fear—fear that they would do to her what she had done to others her whole life. In truth, it wasn't a question of karma; when she felt fear, she didn't dwell on karma, but rather on the fact that she only felt fear because she had done the same to others. She knew only because she had already practiced it, and now, unconsciously, she saw herself in the place of the villain instead of the wronged one. And that new position she now occupied was not an easy one at all.

In her last desperate attempt, she had already played a dirty game, though scarcely selfish. She lowered herself to everything the boy disliked. She vaguely remembered that he had a problem when she said she only liked older men, so she began saying that daily on the phone—that she needed an older man, because he wouldn't have the maturity she needed now.

She did things like that, without thinking even a little about the damage it might cause the boy. She spoke half-truths mixed with absurd things, such as when she claimed she couldn't go visit him because she didn't have the money to buy a first-class plane ticket—at which point he offered to pay. She then shot back that she would only go if it were the most expensive ticket, wanting him to think she was some kind of mercenary; *"that way maybe he'll stop loving me and leave me alone."*

But peace to live *what*, exactly? It wasn't really chaos she was running from, but the responsibility of being the object of someone's love. She was used to controlling everything—even love—feeling it whenever convenient, then giving it freely and later taking it back, as if it had never existed. She was used to being hated by almost everyone; no one understood her way of being, and they only loved her while they were enjoying the charms of the loving energy she possessed. When that love was taken away, it turned into hatred—and then she would lament not being truly loved by anyone.

What she didn't know, however, was that deep down, being hated was more convenient than being loved. Being hated was comfortable; it was easy to fight someone who hated her. But love was difficult—within love there was no hierarchy, no power game. So how could she feel comfortable in the middle of something like that? She said love was all she wanted, that she was addicted to feeling love, but the truth was that pure, true love went against her nature at that time.

And now, for the first time in which she loved and was loved successfully, she didn't know how to deal with it. She didn't know how to deal with complicity, with the simplicity of love, and she looked for flaws in everything, reasons in everything for it to end. The feeling was too big, too strong, too uncontrollable to be allowed—and so she decided it had to be annihilated, since from a young age she had been used to living without it, and that was how she had learned to live, to stand on her own two feet.

She couldn't accept— even unconsciously— the idea that a 22-year-old boy could come along and undo everything, come and dismantle everything she believed in, come and break down all the walls she had carefully built up until then…

It would be too much work to build everything all over again—only this time, in love, she wasn't ready. She had complained her whole life about a life without love, yet she wasn't ready to have one based on it, and she didn't understand that. She sabotaged everything, did everything, manipulated whatever was necessary so that her comforting curse of a reality would not be shaken. She complained about crying, yet it was familiar. She suffered from difficulties, yet they were already known; there was a certain convenience in not having what she wanted, a certain "peace," a certain security.

At least at the end of the day she would know why she would cry, and when problems surfaced she would know where to place the blame—*"on the lack of love,"* of course. But if she now had love, what would it be like? What would she blame then, what would she cry about?

All of this was what was happening, but the girl didn't know that all those fragments of deep life truths, exclusive to that being, translated into a great mosaic of doubts in the oracle of the mind. In truth, doubt did not exist—it never had; what she saw as doubt was only her own understanding, which couldn't interpret the truth or didn't want to see it…

Weeks later, she had already tried to break up with the boy in person and over the phone countless times. Half without thinking, she called to plan a trip with him.

"I've been thinking… Why don't we see each other somewhere that's neither there nor here? Somewhere in between," she said on the phone, mindful that the two of them were separated by a six-hour flight.

"In the middle of the way, you mean?"

"Yes… look at the map and see where the midpoint between New York and Los Angeles is."

"Darling, in the middle of the way there will be a desert, most likely…"

Between the two of them there lay the same thing: a desert of unequal feelings and desires, which at the beginning had been completely aligned between one and the other; now comparison was impossible. The boy acted out of love, while the girl acted out of impulse. She felt lonely and wanted someone to spend the weekend with—*"let it be him, then,"* she thought. She needed to disconnect a bit from everything.

"There's nothing nice worth going to in the middle…" said the boy on the other end of the line, looking at the map. **"Wait, there's Chicago! Chicago is an incredible city, with lots of things to do—we can go there."**

"Isn't Chicago much closer to New York than to here? That doesn't count! That's not the middle! I said the middle!"

"No… it's three hours of flight for each of us," he lied.

"Besides, there's nothing else nice in the middle! Let's go to Chicago!"

"Hmm, well, all right. Chicago, then."

In Chicago everything was perfect. The only problem was the boy's love, which insisted on being too much, meaning it wouldn't let the girl carry on with her plan of *"using him only at convenient times"* without feeling guilty. During their first day there, she had fun with him, doing everything she wanted. Total fun, Kat-style: they went to the park and rode Chicago's famous Ferris wheel; went mini-golfing; went to the arcade; played every kind of game possible and, as usual when they were together, drank a lot—until love and sleep took over.

The next day was more of the same, with the difference that living together was now beginning to feel a bit tiring, because of the divergence in intentions. The girl began to complain about so many displays of affection and to feel suffocated and pressured. It was then that, finally, on the second night, around ten o'clock, after finishing the first bottle of wine, the boy made his first comment that went against her opinion in all that time they had been together.

In the middle of a conversation about social life, the boy blurted out the phrase **“you don’t have friends.”** Given the facts, that sentence had a high offensive power; even if that hadn’t been his intention, the girl didn’t want to know, and she started a fight filled with very heavy insults.

Since she had gone there determined to end the relationship—and that intention remained the same—the boy became a release valve for everything; if she wanted to feel love, it was love, and now that she wanted to feel anger, he became the target of all her anger. Until she let out:

“You know, we really do need to break up—I can’t take your immaturity anymore!”

It was true that she thought the boy immature, but that wasn’t the truth of that moment.

When she said this, he calmly began to defend himself—and to defend love—as he had done other times, but the girl was now determined to end what she had started.

“No!” she shouted. **“You don’t understand—you don’t understand everything that’s going on inside me!”**

“Darling, please, don’t talk like that. I’ll fix everything, I’ll resolve everything! What’s troubling you? Please, tell me and I’ll help you.”

Kat had nothing to say, because there was nothing in the world that he hadn’t already done wonderfully for her and to make her days happier. He didn’t understand that it was *him*—his love—that generated doubts, questions, and desires in her that she had never felt before, while on the other side her mother was dying. She couldn’t allow herself all that happiness right now, all that joy, when the fact that her mother was dying made all she wanted to do be to hate the world! And he didn’t understand—he wouldn’t let her hate the world; it wasn’t possible with him always loving, always gentle and kind, doing everything that pleased her.

And there was still that question: **“why him, then?”**

Since someone was meant to love her so deeply like that, why him and not her fiancé—the one she believed was the right person to be with her for the rest of her life, the one who truly was her destiny, she thought—why not him? All that love with the *wrong* person made her furious! It wasn't supposed to be like this, she thought. Everything was wrong—completely wrong! At least for her it was. She hadn't even had time to hate herself without the Taurean by her side.

Her certainty that she was the ugliest and most undesirable woman in the world—which had come with the breakup of the engagement—began to turn into doubt in her mind with so much affection from the Taurean, because if she truly were the ugliest and most undesirable woman, why would he desire her so wildly? And if she weren't, that hypothesis was even more frightening, because then she couldn't attribute the end of the engagement to that, and her ex would have left her for no reason.

She couldn't let all those doubts take over her mind and allow the Taurean's love. Committing to a relationship with him would mean giving up forever the hope that there might be a return with her ex-fiancé. And that thought, however unlikely it was, was still the only thing keeping her on her feet. So, because of that and all the other ghosts haunting her, her mind said no—no to that relationship, which was forbidden to exist. She would have to kill it before she admitted it existed, before she allowed herself to think about the present.

He had now become too real and pulled her into the present, while everything she longed for was in the past. She didn't accept that present, however magical it was; she simply chose not to see it, because her spoiled, childlike mind couldn't see that what was being given to her was just as wonderful—or even more so—than what she wanted.

"No! I'm sorry, I can't be with you!"

It was already almost 5 a.m., and the boy had broken down in tears, standing by the bedroom window. She, exhausted from so much fighting and dizzy from so much thinking, had also begun to cry.

“My love,” the boy said, approaching the bed again and sitting in front of the girl. **“Don’t cry. Why are you crying?”**

“My God, your face,” the girl said, only then realizing that he had been crying for a long time. **“I don’t know what to say, I just want to say that I love you so much, and I ask that one day you forgive me for my decision now.”**

Having said that, the two of them broke into such painful crying that no words could be spoken. They cried, looking at one another, each with a hand on the other’s face, until the boy, between sobs, managed to form a few sentences:

“Everything you said, my love, is true. I never told you and I never would have, but since I met you something strange has taken hold of me, as if it were a kind of hypnosis, an obsession with you; I can no longer do anything in my life since I met you except think about you. Because of that, everything I had—my company, my businesses, which I fought so hard to build—was going down the drain.”

As he said this, the pain inside Kat grew, because at last, after all she had done, her manipulation had in some way worked—she had convinced the boy that love was something to be chosen between convenience and inconvenience, and based on that she had shown herself to be inconvenient, convincing him that it was better for him to be without her.

“I know that…” the boy continued. **“I started thinking, and everything you said is true, and I know that the right decision is for us to end things, but…”** —as he said this, the boy’s chest was taken over by a feeling of pure suffering, and his mind could express nothing beyond the truest words that had ever come out of his mouth— **“…but when I look at you…”** —he said between one sob and another— **“…I can’t even conceive of a life without you. I don’t feel capable in any way of imagining myself without you. Everything else loses its meaning…”**

“I know, my love, I know, and I’m so sorry!” the girl interrupted, crying hard, caressing the boy’s face and wiping away his tears, as if she couldn’t bear to hear those words.

“…when I look at you, love is stronger than me, stronger than reason, stronger than everything… work, business… everything loses its meaning. But your decision was right. You, as always, are right in everything you do; you have immense wisdom in your decisions, and you know better than I do what you’re doing. You’re right—you’re acting with reason, the way I’ve always acted and the way one should. The one who’s wrong is me… My flight leaves in a few hours; it’s better that I go. I was already about to leave…”

“No! No, please, don’t go! I don’t want to stay here in this hotel room alone! It’s too sad…”

“But, darling, we’re breaking up. From now on you’ll always be alone… or at least without me,” he said, and tears streamed down both their faces effortlessly and without shame, like a river that simply flows, with no intention of proving anything to anyone and no choice but not to care if someone judged them.

The two flights were scheduled for practically the same time, with a difference of ten minutes between them. The two of them, led by Kat, took the same car and, as usual, stayed embraced the entire way to the airport, their hearts in pieces, yet as if all those hours of fighting—together with the alcohol from the three bottles of wine consumed the night before, still without sleep—had been erased, washed away by the river of tears that had passed through them.

When they arrived at the airport, already late, each one ran to find their flight while at the same time not wanting to let go of the other. Then, upon reaching the boarding gate, they realized that the flights were leaving from almost the same place, one gate right next to the other, and the two already-formed lines crossed each other.

The two of them, seized by the panic of being without each other, noticed yet another coincidence, but said nothing. That was when a tremendous despair took over Kat's chest—a sensation like the one that precedes fainting. She didn't know what was happening, but she stepped out of the line and, bringing her face very close to his, pulled him slightly aside and whispered:

"I have an idea! Let's get married!"

"Huh?! What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what you heard. Instead of going back home, let's take the next flight to Vegas and get married there, before reason takes over our heads again," the girl said, desperate, completely devoid of reason, acting on impulse—perhaps the last impulse of her life. She no longer cared about the consequences; the pain was too strong, and she had to give that last chance, that last choice—and once again, of course, hand the choice over to him. Because if the boy didn't accept the proposal, she would return to Los Angeles and go on with her life, knowing that he had been given the chance to change destiny and had not taken it.

"Now?"

"Yes, now—let's both go to Vegas and get married there!"

The boy gave a wide smile of happiness and, deep in his soul, said yes. He also no longer wanted to care about anything; at that point, all he truly wanted was the certainty that, no matter what happened, that love would be forever.

"Are you serious about what you're saying? I mean, this isn't just another one of your games, is it? You understand what a marriage is, don't you? A marriage is forever, and you won't be able to break up with me anymore!"

"Yes, yes! That's exactly why!"

“If I go back to Los Angeles, all the doubts will take over my head again and I won’t know what to do. But now I know what to do, and I know that the decision I made a little while ago wasn’t right. I know here and now that my place is with you—I know because I feel it! But I’m afraid, I’m very afraid of love, and that’s why I run away. But if I can’t run away anymore, then the right path will be taken.”

He smiled and said yes—that it was everything he wanted most—and he considered stepping out of the line to see what the next flight to Las Vegas would be. However, a few minutes later he remembered his commitments.

“Wait, I can’t go now—I have a hearing in New York in a few hours. I have to go back.”

“My God, that’s right! And I have an appointment with the agency this morning. If I don’t arrive today, they’ll fire me—after all the confusion I’ve caused and all my absences…”

And the two of them, looking at each other, began to think about the very reason that had made them cry so much the night before. Up until then, in their understanding, it had been that obsession—and the constant change of plans because of each other—that had caused professional losses for both of them over the past few months.

“But then, what will we do? I can’t give you up!” the girl said, already knowing that if she took that plane alone, her destiny would be to never see him again.

“We don’t have to give each other up. Let’s take this flight now—I’ll go to NY and you to LA. We’ll fulfill our commitments. And next weekend we fly to Vegas and get married—just you and me!”

“But…” Kat said, knowing that if she boarded that flight her fate away from him would be sealed and decided. **“Yes, my love… you’re right… however you want. Are you sure you prefer to take the risk?”**

“What are you talking about? We’re not risking anything. Just one more week—in one week we’ll get married!”

“All right, all right…” Kat said, trying to calm him, but already knowing that it would not come to pass.

That had truly been the heart's last chance, and reason took over the moment her feet touched the floor of the plane back home.

"With every small decision we make, something big in our future is changed…"

CHAPTER 11

Experiencing hell for the second time

The weeks that followed were the hardest of Kat's life. She tried to focus on her mother, not to suffer over the increasingly evident loss of her fiancé, and now she completely ignored all messages and calls from the Taurean. He, no longer knowing what to say, kept calling incessantly and, when his calls were answered—rudely—he would simply fall silent. He didn't want to say anything; he just wanted to be present in some way.

One day, however, he said a sentence that made Kat think deeply—not at that moment, but in the future. It was more a question, a moan of suffering, than a statement. On the phone, after exhausting himself trying to convince the girl to get back together and to give up everything, and seeing that she was unyielding in her decision, he said: **"How can you decide something this serious,"** referring to her leaving his life, **"completely without my participation?… That's not fair… It's my life too that you're drastically changing."**

They were such innocent words from a boy, and at the same time so wise—things Kat had never thought about before…

It's true— she had already broken several hearts like that, she had done it so many times that she had lost the notion that they were hearts, lives, human beings who, just like her, were also only seeking to be happy and who, just like her, suffered the same pain, the same anguish. Until then, Kat had not seen it that way. It was as if men were separate beings; she was too selfish, too arrogant, or perhaps too afraid to see the harm she caused each one of them—and that it didn't stop there. Her actions wounded and influenced those men's lives and behavior for many years… just as the behavior of her father and of the first man who had broken her heart had influenced her own.

But whoever's "fault" it might have been, it certainly wasn't that boy's—yet she, unable to see that, kept taking revenge, as if all men were endlessly paying for those two wrongdoers.

Because of the pain and depression that took over the girl's home, body, and life, she decided to start seeking **"spiritual help."** The director of the school in New York, upon noticing her health problem, once advised her that when she arrived in Los Angeles, she should look for a very famous spiritual healer who had been a childhood friend.

Since childhood, when she used to frequent those places of supernatural healing with her grandmother, Kat had distanced herself from that kind of method. She thought it was better that way; she trusted her own strength and considered herself capable of healing everything on her own, which was also why she didn't seek psychologists. At that point, however, she was desperate and no longer knew what to do. Sadness and sleep took over everything, and any ordinary activity became torture; even taking a shower and eating had become difficult.

So, a few weeks later, Kat already had five professionals "taking care" of her—among spiritual healers, who treated the emotional side and eased the pain in her chest, and psychologists—not to mention the infectious-disease doctors, who were already part of her daily life because of the problem in her breast.

The spiritual treatments on her breast with the Mexican healer—very famous in Hollywood for curing cancer and incurable diseases—really helped a great deal with the pain. With the depression, the illness was already taking over her body, and the bacteria were growing stronger. The other healer, an older woman of American origin, told her that she needed to reconnect with Jesus. She said it was a very powerful force from which Kat, without realizing it, had drifted away.

Kat no longer prayed, and the healer made her light a candle and ask Jesus for protection every day—which turned out to be a much harder task than she had imagined. Kat had never asked anything of anyone, much less of God or Jesus. Aside from the times in childhood when she had asked to die, she had never before—or after—asked for anything, at least not consciously and awake, on Earth. She considered herself too strong and too lucky, despite what everyone around her said—that she seemed to be the unluckiest person in the world.

She had learned to only give thanks. And she attributed all her success up to that point to a culture of daily gratitude she had adopted years earlier. She gave thanks for everything she could remember as soon as she opened her eyes in the morning, and then again for half an hour before going to sleep. Because of that, asking went against her beliefs; she was afraid to ask and appear ungrateful before God, who had already given her so much.

However, the woman believed that in Kat's case there was a kind of healing in the act of asking. Once again, the fear of dependence was disguised there… The woman had understood, in the very first session, that Kat had a phobia—disguised as strength—of depending on anyone, and therefore provided endlessly. She preferred always to be the provider, incessantly, no matter how much it tired and stressed her, rather than depend on anything or anyone. Even if that "something" was God.

She had attended every religion and surrendered herself completely to each one, for a short period of time—from Afro-Brazilian spiritual practices to evangelical Christianity.

She communicated with the Moon and practiced daily some of the teachings of Buddhism. She believed that only through charity would salvation come to the human being, yet she attached herself to nothing and depended on nothing. And despite praying the *Our Father* every night, and whenever she felt afraid of spirits—out of habit and still from a residue of uprightness and discipline implanted by her mother—the Catholic faith that had been so present throughout her life was gradually set aside. And in that phase of deep depression, for months she neither prayed the *Our Father*, nor meditated, nor gave thanks.

Beyond charity and donating her money daily, as she believed she should, she did nothing else.

“Why do you have to give away all your money?” the healer asked.

“Because I have to! Because that’s what I believe!”

And after nearly an hour asking the same question and receiving basically the same answer, the woman decided to say:

“I think there’s a portion of guilt in that excessive giving.”

“Guilt?”

“Yes… For some reason you think you don’t deserve that money, so, without restraint, you go around giving your money away on the street, to everyone… In a way that makes you feel good, but for the wrong reasons. In truth, you feel good and at the same time you don’t, because it’s an act that isn’t healing you at all. Did you light the candles for Jesus, as I told you?”

“Yes! I did—every day, just as you told me.”

“And did you ask for protection?”

“Ask… Well, don’t take this the wrong way—it’s not that I don’t trust what you’re saying… I tried, but I can’t! I’m sorry, I can’t ask.”

“You didn’t ask!? I can’t believe it! You need to ask! You must!”

And the healer began to explain—without stating the reason for such a great necessity, but trying to convince the girl that this would, in some way, heal her; if not completely, at least it would be the beginning of healing.

"Today—today at night—you will do this! Promise me! Do it for me! Please, if not for yourself, then for me. And after you do it, you'll send me a message telling me about it. It doesn't matter what time it is; I'll stay awake waiting for the message."

When she arrived home, Kat lit the candle, as she had already done many times. She knelt in front of it and, as if a greater force were creating a blockage, she tried and couldn't ask. She stayed on her knees for more than half an hour, trying, and the words simply wouldn't come out.

Then she decided to pray, and once again to give thanks and ask for protection for her family members, for the cats, for her mother—just as she always did—but when it came time to ask for herself, the words wouldn't come out. She didn't understand why; she felt stupid, confused. Why was that so important? And she began to feel angry—why should she do something she couldn't do? She even started to think the woman was mocking her.

The fact was that she was asking the wrong questions. The issue wasn't *why* that was so important, but rather *why* one particular sentence— for someone who was an actress and had already spoken all the sentences in the world—bothered her so much. There was a blockage, and she didn't even know it.

But what the woman said had a lot of foundation: asking for help would mean admitting that she needed help, and that would be death for the girl—it would be signing a human contract, admitting that she wasn't invincible and that she wasn't above everything, as she had believed until then, and she thought that certainty was the only thing that kept her strong.

However, although it kept her standing, carrying her on its shoulders, it was leading her in the wrong direction, and that was why she was becoming ill.

As the candle burned down, the position she was in now was beginning to hurt.

Although she was kneeling on a pillow, her entire body was already beginning to hurt. So, defeated by exhaustion and in an act of courage mixed with anger, she decided to ask:

“God… Jesus… I… want to ask for protection… for… me…”

It was as if a dam of pain had just been abruptly broken. Her knees couldn’t bear the weight of the pain and the girl collapsed onto the floor, sitting and crying intensely. After catching her breath, she knelt again and started the sentence once more, and she did this three times, until her knees could no longer support the weight of her body.

She began to cry a deep, suffering cry, full of words of redemption, and admitting that she could no longer endure so much pain, she thought she saw shadows flying around her body. Absorbed in prayer, she paid no attention to the first shadows, but after a minute she saw two more. She opened her eyes tightly, as if trying to force a path through the heavy tears to make the vision disappear, thinking the shadows might be produced by the candlelight mixed with her tears.

But she felt a chill run through her body, and a sepulchral silence took over the room. The girl, afraid, decided to continue praying and asked for protection once again, eyes closed, and prayed intensely until the sensation of cold passed.

The next day, she told the woman that she had done as instructed, but she didn’t share any details. There was no need; as soon as she entered the room, the healer perceived it. She told the girl she knew she had made the request, and that she should ask every day, more and more, so that **“Jesus would protect her now not only from living spirits, but from the evil spirits that surrounded her.”**

Each spiritual professional who helped her contributed to her growth in a unique and wonderful way, improving all the aspects of her life that needed to be worked on.

They not only performed healing rituals with fire, herbs, and candles, but also explained to her why each thing happened. In addition, they were constantly used by the “Voice” to repeat things it had already said to the girl in dreams, and that helped her place herself more and more on the right path.

However, although the depression had not worsened, her desire to live, eat, socialize, and even take a shower remained nonexistent. Now the only thing the girl did was go to her healers’ homes. She felt very good in their presence; it was as if they were angels of light, giving her advice and love at the same time. When she left, however, she felt very bad—dizzy, and sometimes she even vomited. She would stay in bed and couldn’t understand what was happening, which made her increasingly dependent on the treatments.

The hypnotherapist professionals, who were also psychologists, would only say that there was nothing wrong with her, and were actually surprised by such strength and altruism. They found her extremely intelligent and kind, also attributing the depression to the fact that she received nothing in return for her extreme charity—but they had determined that the girl truly expected nothing in return, so they didn’t quite know what to do. They only told her that she didn’t need treatment because there was no diagnosable problem, that she simply needed to accept the pain she was feeling because of the situation with her mother and understand that it would pass.

They did hypnosis treatments so that she would feel more at peace and be able to sleep better—unlike the healers, they were not so opposed to the wine the girl drank, nor to the sleeping medications, which by that point had returned to her life in full force. For weeks, that was all she did: she slept all the time, drugged by medication, waiting for the day of the week when she would go be treated by the “doctors.”

One certain night, returning in the early morning hours and drunk along Hollywood Boulevard, two acquaintances who were with her—actors, classmates from her New York school who were in the city—made her go into a fortune-teller’s house that was open 24 hours a day.

Kat didn't want to go; she had always been against fortune-tellers—not because she didn't believe in their power, but because she believed too much and was afraid of placing her life and her energy in the hands of any human being. She didn't trust them and had said no, but her friends insisted, and off she went.

The palm reader looked about nineteen years old; two other women took her friends, each going to a separate room. Kat was taken to the house's veranda, and the woman began reading her right hand, stating incredibly true facts and even some secrets of the girl's life that no one knew—only she did. That left Kat terrified, yet curious; the woman said things Kat couldn't even confirm, because she felt ashamed to admit they were true…

The woman also spoke quickly and didn't wait for approval or denial. Until, at a certain moment, she fell silent, her face turned to the side. Then she turned back to the girl and said:

"There is a man—a much older man. He prays kneeling on the floor beside the bed, kisses the cross on his neck, and asks you to kiss the cross as well… Right now, this man is performing this ritual… He does this every night… He prays for you and asks you to kiss the cross, as if you were right there beside him. This man loves you very much… I feel a great love—pure love—from him toward you… He is not your father in this life, but his love is as great and pure as a father's. He wants you very much and loves you deeply."

Those words entered Kat's heart like a gunshot, and at the same time like comfort, because of everything the woman had said, that scene—that ritual performed by her ex-fiancé every night they had been together and also over the phone—was one of the deepest and most cherished images that remained of him.

That woman also warned Kat about the spiritual harms of alcohol. She said that, regardless of anything that might happen to her, she should not drink. Absolutely nothing—not a drop of alcohol—nor use any kind of drug, not even marijuana, and that this was very important, that she must not disobey. Kat promised she wouldn't drink, but she knew she was lying; it had already become an addiction and she could no longer get rid of it, especially during those days, which were already turning into weeks and, without realizing it, months of pain and inertia possessed by the spirit of sadness.

Used by the Voice, the director of the film school in New York advised her to buy a book. Kat bought the audiobook *You Can Heal Your Life* by Louise Hay, which claims that certain daily habits, when put into practice, indirectly bring healing to any illness, pain, and sadness.

The director of the film school—who was also the owner and founder of what is still considered one of the best actor-training schools in the world—was a Black woman with long hair, extremely strong, short in stature, and with a commanding voice. She was already past her sixties, and although she never discussed this with the students, she seemed to be a medium and a great translator of the Voice. After watching the actors' individual performances, as she did twice a week, she would speak from the audience things that even the most experienced mediums and seers would envy. She gave great life advice with just a word, or at most a sentence, which always related to the "hidden" personal life of each professional—the part none of us expose, sometimes not even to ourselves. No one in the audience, among the students and teachers watching the presentation in the director's presence, understood anything of what she said "in code" to the actors on stage. Only the person to whom the criticism or advice was directed understood it.

And only when it was your turn on stage did you feel it in your chest, and in the goosebumps on your skin—how her precise words made such a deep and absurd kind of sense that perhaps only God Himself could explain it. She didn't repeat words, but sometimes she repeated them several times. No one understood her method; no one still does. She simply *was*—her wisdom was intoxicating… One could feel safe and understood in her presence, so profoundly understood that tears would well up in the eyes when listening to her speak words that were, most of the time, not said with tenderness, yet carried an indescribable tenderness within them.

Listening to the audiobook, Kat reached conclusions for the first time that would change her life forever. The director, as always, was once again absurdly right. The book offered ideas and advice, telling the life story of the author, also a woman around sixty years old, who narrated her own experiences. She explained how simple daily habits—born from understanding the whole and understanding people—gradually healed old wounds and, as a consequence, illnesses, pain, and sadness.

It was because of the book that Kat, for the first time, managed to understand her mother and convince herself of something she had never been able to accept before: that her mother had truly done her best for her. Based on the book's insights, she began comparing the author's statements with her mother's behavior and past, and the truth began to sprout before her eyes and inside her mind. Everything she saw in the book, the Voice had already told her—and now, through the author's words, it was being said once again.

Because of the book, Kat felt for the first time in her life what she could call love for her mother; she understood that she had never truly felt real love for her. She became filled with respect and gratitude, which had not existed before in her relationship with her mother. And what had been merely a relationship of responsibility and obligation finally began to turn into a relationship of dependence—from mother to daughter.

And that led the girl to feel immense pain… Much greater than before, far beyond everything—because before she identified more with boyfriends and brief friendships than with her mother, and although she had done everything she could for her, what motivated those actions had never been love, but rather a commitment to herself: that she should be better than her parents.

It was as if she did everything in a perfect way, almost like revenge, unconsciously saying: **"Look how terrible you were to me, and look how I repay you by being wonderful—just to show you how bad you are and how much better I am."**

It was like a competition of good deeds, also unconscious, with her sister—who, in Kat's mind, had always been the perfect daughter, the one who never caused trouble. Kat, on the other hand, was the rebellious one, the one everyone called crazy and believed would end up alone in a mental institution. Every act of good faith she showed toward her mother and the family in general was as if she were proving them wrong, showing that she stood above them by being generous to those who had hurt her, betrayed her, criticized her, and stoned her.

It was like a daily victory—the sweetest, the most important one. She had no interest in competing with people on the street; she had nothing to do with them, so she took advantage of them and gave them very little importance. But with her family there was a debt—a debt of victory with herself, with the child Kat, who had grown up lonely and unhappy and now had everything, could do everything, and had finally defeated the monsters of childhood, which in this case were her own parents.

Even though up to that moment she still hadn't managed to fully understand all of this, she *felt* it. Her mind still couldn't compute everything, but she felt it, and because of that she knew, deep down, what was happening.

That was why she was so deeply saddened by the idea of her mother's death, and with all her strength she didn't want her to go. However, the reason for that desire was not love, nor longing, but rather the anger of a creditor whose debt would never be paid.

She thought that, in truth, it wasn't revenge that drove her to do all that, but rather a desire to have everything paid back. She thought: **"I take care of her, and then she will be able to take care of me,"** and she waited for that *care*. She waited for her mother to live forever and serve as her friend, her shoulder, her cook, her nurse, her assistant—everything she might one day need in life, as she imagined it. Since she had no friends and trusted no one, her mother would be her life assistant and help her deal with administrative matters, which she hated handling—something her mother had already been doing slowly even before the illness.

And now, if her mother died, that day of repayment—of returning all the loyalty and care—would never come. And that made the girl furious.

But after the book, all of that disappeared. All that sense of debt vanished, and now she simply thought: **"She is my mother. It is my mother who is leaving."** Reality was beginning to sink in, and she couldn't accept it; her mind couldn't accept the idea that she had never really had a mother, and now that she did, she was about to die. She hadn't even had time to enjoy her own mother. Now she desperately wanted to experience everything between mother and daughter that she had never enjoyed before, because she had never placed herself in the position of a daughter.

She now felt foolish for having spent a large part of the time her mother was ill crying over her ex-fiancé, when she could have been living, enjoying her mother's last months of life with her.

After becoming aware of the book's teachings, she decided not to yell at her mother anymore, nor force her to do anything. She called with the intention of saying that she loved her—something she had never said and had never even felt the urge to say. She couldn't say it, but her mother perceived it; she felt why that call was being made.

And so, from that day on, she could no longer do anything—only cry, cry for the newly born death of her mother, who was already dead, yet still alive.

The depression worsened greatly; now even going to the “doctors” and answering the phone became impossible missions. She tried to wipe away her tears for a few moments when her mother insisted on talking over Skype, but she could no longer even speak to her; she communicated only through messages and tried to dodge voice and video calls, afraid that her mother would notice in her face and voice the immense pain and the deathly look the girl now had.

Every time she had spoken on Skype after that day, she had started crying, and would quickly blame some man for it—most of the time, the Taurean’s name was the first that came to mind. By then she had already created a false story for her mother, saying that the boy made her suffer and had called shortly before to fight, in an attempt to distract her mother and make her believe that the crying was in no way because of her.

Until the last day of her life, abruptly taken by cancer, her mother had to believe that she would live. And in Kat’s mind, her mother could never perceive any sadness in her daughter because of her condition, because she knew that would be the worst thing her mother could see.

“Why are you crying, my daughter? Please, don’t cry!” her mother would say from the hospital bed, her voice already filled with sadness, sensing that soon she would no longer be there to comfort her daughter from any pain.

“Oh, Mom, you know… I don’t want to talk about it… but it’s the Taurean again…”

“Again, my daughter?!” her mother said, surprised. **“But what did that boy do this time?”**

“Well… I don’t even know what to do anymore… Oh, I don’t even want to talk about it,” the girl said, sobbing, trying as hard as possible to control her crying, looking at her mother’s round little face in the hospital bed, which seemed so worried about the girl’s ridiculous, invented love relationship and completely forgot her own problem.

“My daughter, please, don’t cry like this over a boy! What’s happening to you? You’ve always been so strong! You were never the kind to let any boy make you cry—this reaction of yours now is hard to understand.”

“I know, Mom… But I don’t want to talk about it. Let’s focus on you and your recovery—I want to know about you,” she said, regaining her voice and controlling the torrent of tears.

“Leave him alone, my daughter! If he makes you suffer like this, leave him alone! It doesn’t matter that you love him or anything. No one has the right to make you suffer like this. Don’t allow it. Send him far away and forget him,” her mother said, without imagining that the entire story was invented and that all the crying of the past months had been because of her.

The words her mother spoke about the almost imaginary boy were barely heard. The girl felt terrible for having to lie so much to her mother—the person to whom she had once told everything, who had always known her as a strong and decisive woman, and who now couldn’t understand her daughter’s behavior. Kat couldn’t say that nothing had changed regarding men, that in fact she had blocked the Taurean on her phone months earlier, that she couldn’t be further from thinking about any boy or anything at all—except her, her mother.

The following days were filled with prayer and meditation. Now Kat desperately asked God and all the angels not to take her mother, because she wouldn’t be able to live without her. She had grown used to being her teacher, to getting angry with her when she didn’t understand anything of the “lesson.” She could no longer live without the habit of trying to change her and teach her how to live—without the arguments or, now, without the love. She had only just discovered her love for her mother, and she could no longer live without it.

In any case, she had truly lived and dedicated her entire life to her mother; whether through anger or through love, she had been the north, the reason for everything.

Without her, nothing had meaning; it wasn't worth getting up in the morning. So if her mother were to go, she would stop being human and become a plant, because a human being without meaning in life, without a reason to exist, is merely a plant—alive, yet only existing, nothing more.

On one of those days of great suffering, prayer, and meditation, Kat received the hardest message of her life.

Sitting on the bed crying, speaking to God out loud, begging Him to let her mother remain alive, it was as if the "Voices" left the world of dreams and entered her world, materializing in front of the girl.

In the direction of the bedroom door, facing the bed, three specters of white light with a certain transparency descended, one positioned right beside the other, appearing to be about three meters tall. They descended quickly and had no expression or facial features; one could only make out a rounded shadow where the head would be, the width of the shoulders, and the outline of light descending straight down where the legs would be.

The specters moved closer to the girl, and a kind of voice—or rather, words, because there was no sound—as if speaking to her, caused words to arise inside her mind saying: **"She must go."**

Upon seeing and hearing this, the girl began to cry uncontrollably, begging it not to be true, and screaming at what had now taken the form of spirits, still without expression or features—only a shadow in the shape of a body, floating a little less than half a meter above the ground.

"She must go. You must let her go."

"No! No, please! Let her stay here with me! Let her stay! Please! Or take me in her place!"

Suddenly, a bright opening appeared in the bedroom ceiling, revealing the image of her mother sleeping in the hospital bed, with the light turned off.

It was an image Kat had not seen in person, because she hadn't seen her mother for two months; yet at that time she was still walking and seemed well.

"Mom! Mom! Is that you? But how? What are you doing here? How can you be here? You're not dead! You're in the hospital—I talked to you this morning!"

At that moment, the scene of her mother—clear on the bedroom ceiling as if it were a movie screen—froze, and what appeared to be her image, now with a transparent aspect, stepped out of the sleeping body in the hospital bed, smiling and healthy, saying:

"My daughter, my body is there in the hospital, but my soul is already more here than there. My soul needs healing now, and the healing will come, but for that my body on Earth must die."

"Mom! No! Please!" the girl cried, sobbing, now curled up on the floor in the corner of the room, squeezing her eyes shut as if trying to escape what she was seeing—and the truth—only to be shocked when she opened them and realized it was still happening.

"Yes. My soul is already being treated here in this new place. My time on Earth is over, and I only remain there because you and your sister won't let me go. Your prayers and pleas, and everything you do so that I may be healed, will not be in vain. I am already being healed, but my healing will not happen on Earth. For that to happen, you must let me go."

At that moment, the spirits—who had been three—were now many; they had shrunk in size and formed a kind of circle around the girl. Their faces had no expression, but the outline of their light grew increasingly sharp, and now she could see that the spirits were watching her, looking downward toward where she was curled up, as if their attention were 100% fixed on her.

Upon hearing her mother's words, the girl—being practically forced to accept that truth, as if she no longer had control over anything—began to feel an immense pain, a pain that seemed it would only end when she died and stopped breathing.

She begged God to take that pain away from her so she could focus on what her mother was saying. It was as if the pain had a sound and wouldn't let her hear or identify the words, which were now becoming increasingly less clear—unlike the images, which appeared vividly before her eyes, less than a meter away.

The spirits drew closer and closer, and now the circle had closed to less than half a meter from the girl. Then, as if a balm of calm had been poured over her, the crying automatically stopped and she became inert.

"Tell your sister to let me go… She holds me to the Earth and ends up making what is natural more difficult. My path continues. I move on naturally. In part, I have already moved on. Now I only need you to release the rest of me that still remains with you."

Unable to say anything, the girl curled up even more in the corner of the room, and little by little the images began to dissipate, until the room was left in complete silence and darkness, since the lights were off and outside it was already night. The calm and the strange inertia of peace then began to fade, and the girl started to cry uncontrollably—this time only begging God to take away the pain she felt.

Then, after crying for hours, motionless as if a force field were holding her to that patch of floor, she fell asleep right there, curled up on the ground in the corner of the room.

The next day, she tried to explain in broad terms to her sister—who was evangelical and at that moment was at the hospital with their mother—that she had a message for her, and she said: **"You have to let her go."**

Her sister, who already had a very bad relationship with the girl, not understanding anything, shouted angrily on the phone, as she had never done before:

"Are you crazy? On what basis are you saying this?"

“Stop bringing bad omens onto my mother! She will not die! I believe! She’s not going anywhere!”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you how I know this. And it wasn’t even a little bit easy for me to hear it either… But I spoke with her soul.”

“You spoke with her soul?” her sister shouted, full of anger and disbelief.

“Yes… Her soul was in my room last night and asked us to let her go. I’m only telling you because she asked me to tell y—”

“You are possessed by the devil, that’s what you are!” her sister shouted, interrupting her.

“My God! You’ve lost your mind! Don’t say something like that!”

“That’s what you saw! The devil’s spirit playing tricks on you! You should go to church! Right now! Go to the nearest church! Because you are being visited by the devil and you’re letting him take possession of you.”

Hearing this, the girl hung up the phone and swore never to speak to her sister again—or say anything more to her. Those words caused an even greater feeling of loneliness, intensifying the pain she already felt.

She went to the house of one of the hypnotherapists and told him what was happening, and that she had changed her mind. Whereas before she had said she didn’t want to see her mother in that state nor be there when she died, now she felt that she should—but she didn’t have the strength.

The professional, who was also a psychologist and had now almost become a best friend, said that perhaps it would be too heavy, too traumatic to go through all of that—but that perhaps it was necessary. He asked whether she would do it for herself, or whether she would do it because of all her sister’s criticism.

“I don’t know… I don’t know what to think. I just feel very selfish and very guilty for not being there. I feel that my mother needs my strength very much right now, but I don’t have any to give—that’s why I’m not there…”

“But maybe she needs to tell me something in order to feel at peace enough to ‘go,’ and because I know that, I don’t want to go. I feel that when I go, she will die… And I’m not ready for that.”**

After many hours of conversation, the psychologist asked how long it had been since she had done anything that gave her pleasure or joy.

The girl fell silent, trying to answer that question, because she hadn’t thought about it for a long time; she couldn’t even quiet her own thoughts enough for the last image of joy to come to mind.

“I don’t remember!”

“Try… the last time you felt happy, where were you?”

The girl then went deep into her thoughts again, trying to remember the image—and nothing…

“My God… I really don’t remember.”

“Then lie down here; I’ll hypnotize you and let’s see if we can resolve this issue,” said the psychologist, adjusting the pillow on the comfortable couch.

“All right.”

During an hour of hypnosis, the girl remained in a state as if she were asleep the entire time, yet she smiled a lot and spoke. When she opened her eyes, she was smiling and felt an immense sense of joy in her chest. She didn’t remember anything that was troubling her in real life at that moment; it was as if her problems had given way to newly recovered memories of joy, and those had filled her entire mental space, leaving no room for sadness to return when she woke up.

When she regained full awareness, she was smiling broadly—and so was the psychologist.

“My God! I feel happy! What a wonderful feeling.”

Her eyes, without her understanding why, welled up with tears of joy.

“Yes! You are happy!” the psychologist said, smiling. **“You smiled and laughed throughout the entire session. Where were you? Can you remember?”**

When the girl tried to remember, the images—still vivid in her mind, as if she were still there—began to blur, and the psychologist had taken many minutes to ask that question, as if he knew that would happen.

“Yes… yes… I mean… yes! I remember! I was with him! I was with him in New York, and I was very happy! But it wasn’t exactly a memory—it was now, as if it were happening now, and at the same time a projection of everything beautiful contained in old memories, but now lived in a way I had never lived before! How strange!”

In the dream, which came in a kind of trance, the girl relived wonderful moments with the Taurus boy—but this time she was a much more open person, and although the memories and events were the same, she was someone else. It was as if she acted, spoke, and reacted to everything differently—much happier, and enjoying each moment far more, grateful for what was happening there.

“I know now,” Kat said, understanding everything. **“The images were me—but without the great weight that afflicted my heart. My God! How crazy! The images were me, but without the sadness. It was as if I lived all of that with him, but this time without my mother’s sorrow constantly in my heart and my mind consumed by guilt and memories of my ex-fiancé… In this ‘new reality,’ he had me. It was me there, fully in the present, and much happier.”**

And that realization brought her back into a momentary circle of sadness—but a shallow one, as if nothing could deeply affect the happiness she was feeling.

“And who is this person? Who is he?” the psychologist asked, intrigued, having never heard about that person in more than six months of treatment.

“Oh… him… he’s nobody.”

“Nobody?”

“I mean… he’s nobody important. He’s a boy I was with some time ago and ended up breaking up with.”

“Kat! If he were ‘nobody,’ as you say, he wouldn’t be in your subconscious in such a deep way. Why did you break up with him? It seems to me sometimes that you block everything that could bring you joy—has that ever crossed your mind?”

That made her thoughts return to the older healer, who had told her exactly the same thing a few months earlier—and precisely when referring to the same subject: the boy. At that time, the woman had said she had seen more, that Kat’s spirit had a tendency to make itself suffer. **“What does that mean?”** Kat had asked back then.

“It means that your spirit has spent its last lives suffering greatly, going through immense pain and tragedies, and it seems to me that you’ve become somewhat accustomed to that. The message I have from the angels for you is this: ‘you no longer need to go through that.’ You’ve already gone through all the pain and all the trials you needed to, and now it’s time to be happy. Some tragedies in life are inevitable, but you must be careful, because some are being caused by you… Certain pains don’t need to happen, and you cause suffering to yourself because it gives you a certain sense of safety, a certain feeling of control—because sadness is something you’re already used to, but complete happiness isn’t yet, and that can frighten you and, unconsciously, make you run away from it.”

Of course, at the time—no matter how much sense those words made in Kat’s mind—she didn’t give them the importance they deserved, or she thought she didn’t yet have the strength to fix anything at that moment, and was waiting to get better so that such a step toward being happy could be taken.

“Yes… someone had already told me that once, but I was waiting for my depression to pass… to get better so I could start being happy,” she continued in the conversation with the hypnotherapist.

“Get better to be happy? That makes no sense at all. There is no path to happiness—happiness *is* the path! To be happy, you have to be happy, period. There’s no other way!”

“It’s true! It’s true! That makes complete sense! But how? How do I do that? How can I be happy if I’m sad?”

“Why don’t you start by seeking out situations that make you happy? This boy, for example—where is he?”

“That boy… uh… he’s in New York, he lives there…”

“So why don’t you go there before going to Brazil to see your mother? It’s an option.”

The psychologist—now speaking more as a friend than as a professional—had reached an unexpected point of clarity in the girl’s mind, like a great breath of resolution. His idea had been the only one that cast any light on the dilemma of *“being happy and seeing her mother at the same time.”* It wasn’t such a bad idea after all; the Taurean had already served other times as a formula for joy, like a bandage to stop the bleeding of pain, and only he seemed to have that gift—doing it so well and with such an open heart. So why not, right?

“But I blocked him… I haven’t spoken to him for…” she stopped, trying to remember. **“Wow, I don’t even remember—but it must be almost six months now…”**

After talking a lot with the psychologist, in a session that—as usual—had already gone past six hours of conversation, she began to convince herself more and more each minute that it wasn’t a bad idea.

“You know, maybe I should call him… who knows. See what he says. That way I’d spend three days in New York being happy, and then I’d go to Brazil to face my destiny!”

“Do you think he’ll be there for you? I mean, will he welcome you with open arms, be supportive if you feel bad and have a relapse into sadness or something like that?”

“The Taurean? Oh yes, for sure! He’s always loved me a lot. He’s always been very kind and attentive.”

“Then it sounds like a great idea.”

Leaving the psychologist’s house late at night, the girl unblocked the Taurean. And without either of them bringing up the phone block, he answered as if nothing had happened. It was as if all those months had never passed.

“Hi! Kat! Wow, it’s been so long!”

“Yes… well… so… I have to go to Brazil in three days… And since I’m not doing anything in Los Angeles, I thought I’d go to New York to spend these next three days with you and then go to Brazil from there.”

“Yes! Wow, that sounds like a great idea! It’ll be wonderful to see you! When do you arrive?”

“Uh…” the girl said, remembering that she didn’t yet have a flight, or a suitcase, or anything—and not wanting to say that she had made that decision ten minutes earlier. **“Um… tomorrow. I arrive tomorrow morning!”**

“That’s great! All right, let me know what time you arrive and I’ll meet you as early as possible. I’ll work tomorrow, but I’ll try to get free earlier so we can do something together in the afternoon.”

“Perfect!”

She hung up the phone feeling wonderful, like she hadn’t in a long time—she didn’t even know how long it had been since she’d felt that way. She wondered whether she should call again to warn the boy that she had had serious depression issues in the past month and that he would be responsible for her mental and physical health over the next three days… But she was busy packing and being happy, so she decided to send only a brief three-line message, to which the boy replied saying that he understood.

The message said that she wouldn't be able to sleep alone, because she still didn't feel well sleeping alone in hotels, and he said there would be no problem, since he would be free that entire weekend for her arrival and, as in the old days, would have plenty of time to sleep and be with her until she left.

Arriving in New York in the late afternoon, she went straight to the hotel to wait for him. The same happiness that had flooded Kat in the hypnosis chair was still with her, like fireworks that wouldn't stop exploding. She was happy and felt wonderful to be there, as if she had been waiting for that meeting for a long time.

He only managed to free himself from work after 11 p.m. When he knocked on the hotel room door, on the other side was the girl, naked. He, wearing a thick black-and-gray coat, covered in snow that was falling nonstop outside in a cold that exceeded minus 18 degrees Celsius, was struck by a wave of heat from the room, which had the heater turned up to the maximum, nearly reaching 40 degrees. It was as if the boy had opened a magical portal that transported him to the tropical heat of some beach in Brazil—and, as if that weren't enough, the girl, with a sculpted body and a wide smile, kissed and hugged him before he could even say "hi."

She had applied rose oil with cinnamon to her skin, completing the boy's total state of hypnosis, and of course on top of that the perfume—the much-praised dark-red bottle of a French brand, with an intoxicating jasmine scent, mixed with wood and spices underneath.

If there were a paradise anywhere, the two of them were in it, and, as before, amid hugs and kisses, they were transported into a kind of capsule of a perfect world, where everything was pleasure and love, and the feeling of complicity and peace was infinite. There was no way to think about anything—but if it had been possible to use their minds at that moment, they surely would have decided to stay there, in that warm spiral of perfection, forever.

Hours later, already close to 4 a.m., when her mind slowly began to take control again, the boy opened his mouth to say his first complete sentence.

“What I didn’t have time to tell you is that I won’t be able to sleep here.”

“Huh? Of course you will! It’s already almost 4 a.m., you’re not going to leave now!” the girl said, hugging him as if he weren’t serious.

“No… I am serious… I can’t sleep here.”

“But why not?”

“I have to wake up very early tomorrow and I need to be on the other side of the city. I thought you were staying at that same hotel where you used to live, which is five minutes from my place… Why did you choose this one so far away?”

“I didn’t choose it—the other one was fully booked. It’s Fashion Week in the city; there was nothing available, so they put me in this one. And since I also wanted to attend film classes, I thought it would be convenient—it’s a fifteen-minute walk from Broadway.”

“Yes… fifteen minutes on foot from Broadway, but twenty minutes by car for me… and that, with traffic, is a lot!”

Kat began to think there was some other reason why the boy didn’t want to stay, since she had never heard him speak like that before. After all, she had come all the way from Los Angeles to be there—he couldn’t really be complaining about a twenty-minute drive. So she didn’t say anything else about it; she simply looked at him and said:

“Please, stay. I really need you these days.”

Two sentences she had never said while looking into anyone’s eyes before—and those words probably held more truth than everything she had lived with the boy up until that moment.

“I’m sorry, darling, I can’t—I need to go,” he said, getting out of bed, paying no attention at all to the truths, the words, or the person who spoke them.

“What time will I see you tomorrow, then?”

“Tomorrow? At 7, okay? At 7 I can free myself and come.”

“All right…” the girl agreed. **“I’ll spend the day at film school, then. At 7 there’s the class I like most, but I’ll leave early, miss that class, and come meet you here!”** she said, smiling.

As soon as the boy left, a cold and a darkness took over the room, as if he had taken all the warmth and all the girl’s happiness with him as he walked out the door. She lay down on the icy sheets and took a long time to fall asleep, but she resigned herself to the idea that she was probably exaggerating, and thought that the feeling of loneliness in her chest was likely a product of depression, and that the next day everything would be better.

The next day, the girl did as agreed; she left school early, but the boy gave no sign—he only replied to the good-morning message that morning and nothing else. At 7 p.m. she sent him a message and got nothing. Until, around 9, he replied apologizing, saying he could no longer come, blaming work.

The girl then worried about returning to the hotel and sleeping another day alone in the cold room. She walked back, as she usually did on the fifteen-minute route, walking under a snowstorm and between snowbanks that reached almost a meter high. There was no one on the street, because during snowstorms there is a curfew in New York due to the danger to life from snow-related accidents, heavy ice breaking off skyscrapers, as well as physical, respiratory, and cardiac problems caused by the extreme cold—so no one could go out on the street, and people were even subject to fines if they disobeyed the order.

But the girl was already used to it; she had walked that route every day from where she used to live to school, sometimes returning as late as 4 a.m.—an hour and ten minutes on foot to go, and the same to come back, at a very fast pace.

That was the girl's favorite moment. Despite hating the cold and the snow, she felt at peace seeing the entire city white and not a single soul in the streets besides her own. Sometimes she felt afraid, but it soon passed; risk was a constant companion and made her feel self-sufficient. The silence of the streets calmed her mind—it was like a kind of meditation. It helped silence her thoughts. That hour and ten minutes thinking about everything were what had allowed her to live in New York and continue being herself.

But nothing was like before; now she walked only fifteen minutes and already felt lost, certain of nothing. She didn't know what to do. She thought about calling some acquaintances and going out to drink, then remembered she had a class the next day at 9 a.m., and that it might be better to sleep instead of causing any more trouble.

She called her mother, whom she had already tried to speak with several times that day; her mother answered, already very weakened, in her hospital bed. Kat spoke to her as if nothing were happening, said that everything in NY was great, and assured her that she would be arriving in Brazil in two days. They made plans; her mother was very happy with the news that her daughter was coming—she hadn't seen her for almost two months and could hardly wait to see her.

"Me too, Mom, I love you so much, I'll be there soon! Behave yourself! I heard you're strong and steady, but you can't talk much. Be happy! I'm happy! I'll call you tomorrow morning."

She hung up the phone and it was as if total despair had taken over everything. She began to cry desperately, unable to control herself, until she lost her breath. Then she looked out the window, outside, and something—seeing the snow fall slowly from the sky—made her calm down. The empty streets, the snow falling gently, the silence of the empty hotel room, her cheeks cold and red from the chill formed a placid landscape; it was as if the world were at peace.

“It is at peace,” she said about the world, as if in a trance, repeating the words of the Voice itself, which now spoke inside her head. **“Everything is at peace,”** she repeated, her gaze fixed on the snow, feeling her heartbeat slow and the last tear—still lingering in her eyes—fall.

As she slept:

“You are sad—I thought you were happy.”

“I was happy… happy until I arrived here and saw that he would do this to me,” Kat replied to the Voice, in a reality where she awoke in the hotel bed where she was sleeping, as if the scene were happening on Earth.

“And what is he doing to you?”

“He’s making me sad by not wanting me!”

“And who told you he doesn’t want you? Did he tell you that?”

“No… he didn’t say it, but it’s obvious from his actions…”

“You say that because he didn’t come to see you?”

“Yes, of course!”

“You interpret one of his actions and turn it into a certainty inside yourself—just as you do with everything else, just as humans do with everything. Come with me; I’ll show you something.”

Hearing this, Kat got out of bed, naked as she had been when she fell asleep, and walked toward the room’s wall, passing through it as if it were made of smoke. She walked straight ahead, crossing the hotel rooms without surprise, as if the ability to pass through walls were something ordinary. She passed by people who were sleeping, until she reached a room where a couple was awake, arguing; and when she realized she was naked, she turned, startled, to the Voice that spoke to her:

“Wow!” she exclaimed, trying to cover herself with her hand and noticing that the couple didn’t seem to care about her. **“Can they see me?”**

“No, they can’t see you.”

And she kept walking. She walked on her own feet, moved by her own will, but at the same time guided by the Voice; it was as if the Voice walked beside her, leading her somewhere.

She passed through all the rooms until she reached the edge of the building, and then, without any warning, continued walking straight through the air, as if beyond the wall there were a transparent glass floor cutting across the entire city. As she walked, the Voice kept speaking, until they reached a place the girl knew very well…

“This place! This apartment! It’s his home! It’s the Taurean’s house!”

“Yes…”

And now, confused, with no idea what was happening, she watched everything in fear, walking through the corridors of the apartment she hadn’t seen in a long time.

“Ah!” she startled when she saw the boy lying on the bed, dressed, with the lights on. **“It’s him, right there! What is he doing?”** she asked, hiding behind the bedroom door, still afraid she might be seen.

“He’s thinking about you… this happened a few hours ago.”

Then an invisible force pulled the girl into the boy’s body. She fell, entering his body as if she had become him, yet still with her own consciousness active.

She was him now—she felt and experienced everything he felt, thought his thoughts, carried the weight of his longings, of everything that was his.

“My God, what is happening here?” she said, utterly terrified.

She felt immense fear and extreme pain, and she had no choice but to remain there—either trapped in the inertia of being part of it, and despite the fear, the truth was that she didn’t want to leave.

It took her a while to realize that she was truly inside the boy's body, and that what she was feeling were *his* sensations, and what arose in her mind were *his* thoughts, mixed with hers—thoughts that had completely different colors.

The boy had been holding his phone for a long time, and on the screen was her contact. He felt trapped. The sensation was like a kind of spiritual prison; his fingers hesitated and his mind weighed things—he had decided earlier that night whether or not he would go see her.

Suddenly an immense pain took over the bloodstream. She felt the boy's heart beat harder and the blood grow hot. It was the sensation of pure love violently killed by a total lack of trust. The feeling of love came and went and was quickly overtaken by a feeling of lost admiration, of total loss. He looked at the phone as if he were looking at Kat—the phone in his hands represented her, contact with her. And the sensation was that the Kat once so deeply loved now represented a great threat, something terrible, to be feared and expelled from his life at any cost.

"Aaah!" the boy shouted, standing up and sitting on the bed. **"You know it! You already know where this leads and what you have to do! Be a man! She's just a woman—she has no power over you!"** he said, yelling at himself in anger. And the thoughts—now perceived simultaneously by Kat—were a whirlwind of intensely colored images spinning through the mind like a fast wheel, without stopping.

Suddenly the wheel seemed to stop on a memory, and immediately Kat was sucked out of the boy's body and appeared again at the apartment door. Looking from the doorway toward the kitchen, she saw the two of them laughing and playing.

"What is this?" she asked the Voice, confused. **"Is this us?"**

"This happened a few months ago," the Voice replied.

"Yes, now I remember that day! We were cooking, and he was very happy…"

Suddenly her body was pulled in again, falling back inside his. And as if it were happening in the present moment, Kat now felt everything that was happening inside him.

From inside him, Kat looked at herself on the outside, living that happy reality and laughing, and through the boy's eyes she looked at that being who, in the world, was just another playful blond girl—but he didn't see her that way. It was a love so pure, so much more genuine than she could imagine. It was complete trust that he felt there. It was the peace of having found the most special being in the world.

"My God," she thought from inside the boy's body, as if watching a film of herself. **"I've never felt this way about anyone! He has more love for me than I have for myself."** And she watched, terrified, feeling all the sensations of pure love, light, and union inside him—as if it were invincible, as if he had found something eternal there, something that nothing could ever shatter.

While he watched the girl talking and cooking, there was a light of enchantment in his thoughts.

Then, abruptly, she was taken to the hotel room in Chicago, on the day of the fight and the breakup, still inside the boy's body.

"My God, what pain! Make it stop!" she screamed in thought. She felt an absurd pain of loss and despair, as if the meaning of everything were slipping away. Sitting in front of him was herself, also crying. Suddenly she lost all sense of self and felt—and was—only the boy.

"I know you're right, my love… But now, looking at you… just thinking about a life without you… I can't…"

She landed on the moment when the boy said that sentence, looking at her and crying intensely—feeling the pain of someone who sees the only certainty he has in life leaving him. And even so, through his eyes, he looked at Kat and saw an angel, something full of light, which now tore his heart apart without mercy. The pain he felt was comparable to the death of a close family member—and the boy had never experienced any loss before.

Then the girl was pulled into a tunnel of white light, where she felt intense cold and mental confusion. Several flashes, with scenes flickering rapidly, passed along the tunnel's walls. Then she fell into one of the realities in which she and the boy were running on a beach with three children.

The appearance and maturity of the two of them felt as if they were much older. Kat entered the boy's body again, watching herself run ahead, and with every touch of hands, with every exchange of glances, the feeling was one of love and care.

"He has already been your husband in another life," said the Voice, narrating the scene and clearing the girl's mind inside the boy, the only one who could hear it.

"Yes! I feel it! My God, these children…! My God, these children are ours!" she said, astonished, as she looked at one of the children through the boy's eyes and understood that he was looking at a son.

And, as on the other occasions, she was abruptly pulled away again, falling once more into the boy's apartment, now on some day between the breakup and that reunion.

The boy cried intensely and tried to sleep, night after night, and the feeling was desperate.

"My God, I can't take it anymore! So much pain!" the girl thought from inside his body.

And so the scenes passed—long days and nights of suffering, crying, and confused pain, without knowing what to do to escape it. She witnessed, from within him, months after the breakup, and now felt on her own skin what her stubbornness and lack of love had caused that person. And when he begged her not to do that, not to leave him, she—now living the situation from inside him—begged as well:

"Please, Kat, please, don't… don't do this!" —and how those words hurt.

While she agonized inside the boy lying on the bed, crying, the Voice said:

**"He was not only your husband in one life… He finds you in many existences… he is always here. The two spirits are always intertwined, as they must be, and as it was in this life; sometimes they stay together for a short period of time, sometimes for a longer one. They stay together experiencing an earthly life, one helping the other, until the mission in the other's life is fulfilled, and then each one goes their own way.

Despite being the strongest union of each existence, they never remain living together in a body for many decades in a single life, as other lovers on Earth do. But they are united for an entire eternity. One needs the other to pass from one difficult phase to another, and one is voluntarily used by the other so that this may be possible…"**

"Now, answering your earlier dilemma," the Voice continued, **"the issue here is not a lack of desire on his part. It is a memory imprinted in the DNA of your spirit that every time you come together, you go through moments of great pain and transformation. Exactly in the way it must be, and needs to be. However, the spirit tends to run from the vibration of extreme pain and repels the other when it sees it.

That is why, when you saw him for the first time in this life, you felt tempted to run away from him… This happens in many lives, but later the force of the paths becomes stronger and manifests itself. Not always, but most of the time.

When the meeting of these two souls does not happen—either because of a deviation in the path of one of them or because of repulsion at the very moment of recognition in life, out of fear of the learning that will come through pain—the human being is harmed, because the learning that comes from the experiences lived with this specific soul works like a kind of accelerated maturation.

What you learn and evolve in a short time by living through difficulties with this soul, without it you would take decades on the earthly plane to learn—and perhaps even an entire lifetime."**

At that moment, Kat left the boy's body, her own spirit being sucked by a kind of transparent spiritual vacuum and abruptly falling back into her hotel bed.

"I want you, through the things you saw today, to understand that—not only in the situation with the boy—you and all humans base all certainties on your own judgment, which is often mistaken and flawed, about everything you see and experience."

"So you're saying that everything I see, read, and hear isn't actually what it is? How confusing! My head hurts."

"Exactly. Even a simple tree will be seen and interpreted by you in one way, and that same tree will be seen and interpreted by another person—even if they are going through similar situations—in a completely different way. It will hold value for you in one way and a different value for another, and it will become a different certainty inside each person. Because, in truth, the image comes from within the one who sees, not from the image itself."

"My God… now everything makes sense!" the girl said, astonished, clearly feeling everything the Voice was saying.

"The world itself is not just one; within it exist many worlds and concepts of the world. At the same time that we are talking here, in another world (a concept similar to what humans know as 'other dimensions'), another reality—also having you as its protagonist, just like this one—is happening."

"What do you mean? So I'm here and in another place at the same time?"

"Yes, you can be in several places and in several worlds (dimensions) at the same time. And in the one from which I speak to you now, you are in your room, writing a book."

A book,
which people are already reading—even right now—and each person is seeing and feeling every word according to their own existential experiences. No word will be read by two humans in the same way. It could be said that it is as if this book were blank, as if it were only a stack of blank pages and the words appeared on the paper in front of each reader, being created instantaneously, a product of each person's mind.

"Me, writing a book?" Kat said, ignoring the other information. **"A book about what?"**

"A book of your own. Telling your life."

"Me? Impossible! I would never write a book! I don't even like writing anymore—I haven't for years! And even more so talking about my life! I don't talk about my life to anyone. That's the best part of not having friends—never having to tell anything… That reality would only be possible if I were tied up! Am I being forced to do this?"

"No. You do it of your own free will."

When the Voice said this, the girl fell into a room in Los Angeles where, sitting on a bed, she was typing on a computer.

"My God, that's me!"

"Yes, it's you."

"So this is my future? Then we can move forward in time too?"

"Time does not exist. We can walk freely through any part of your existence—whether here, in a time you haven't yet experienced in your current reality but are already living in another dimension; or when you were a child; or in any other life you have lived. We can see everything, go, return, and witness everything again and again 'for the first time,' as many times as necessary."

On the computer screen, what appeared to be the book's title could be read:
"You Wrote This Book."

"'You Wrote This Book'?" the girl asked, reading the title on the screen. **"Why did I give my book that name?"**

"You try to convey to people the concept of creation upon creation—the one I've just explained to you. But this won't be the final title; it will still change many times."

"'You Wrote This Book'! What an interesting name for a book! But wait… If you're telling me that everything we hear also goes through this automatic process of transformation and becomes something else inside our ears, then I might be misinterpreting *you* as well! I might be hearing you, but at the same time creating other words in your answers."

"Exactly. What I say is often interpreted in a completely different way… And then the teaching—the wrong message—can be passed on to the world, simply because a mind heard me, but in truth heard other words. Every human has the power of automatic creation over real creation, and that is why many die for a 'truth,' spend their lives living a certainty, preaching a religion, a message, a word they truly believe in—because it really happened, the conversation with the Voice was real—but when translating my words in their own mind, those words came loaded with other existences, and even with lower planes they have already been in. The result of this is the confusion of Unity and, consequently, the disaster of the Whole. That is why on Earth humans divide themselves into many religions, into many concepts of what God is and what His message is—yet the message is only one. They receive the same message every day from different points of view. Despite the great confusion in translating the TRUE TRUTH in each human mind, it is one and the same, and it is spoken to everyone."

Waking up with a splitting headache and horrible pain all over her body, remembering nothing, Kat staggered to her feet and went straight to her suitcase to grab a painkiller.

“This pain can only be from sadness; I was so disappointed in him that I even got sick! God forbid!”

The next day, the boy did the same thing—made plans with her and then said he wouldn’t be able to go. The girl, who for the second time had missed the class she loved most and was once again preparing to face another long night of crying and inner cold alone in the hotel, complained. She told him that it would be her last night there and that her flight would leave at 5 a.m. for Brazil.

The boy asked her to understand, explained that it wasn’t his fault, and lied again, blaming work once more. He insisted that she change her flight, promising that the next day they would do something incredible, like in the old days, and assured her that everything would be fine.

Unlike what would have happened months earlier, the girl didn’t scream much or start a big fight; she had already fought too much about everything. Now she was weak—she just wanted to be with someone who loved her, or at least someone who could make her forget for a moment everything that was happening. After all, she had gone there to seek strength in something. By that point, anyone else would already have given up—but not her. She wasn’t like that; she was strong, she believed in the best, she didn’t even consider the idea that something might go wrong or that the trip would end in tears and losses.

She ended up agreeing with the boy to change the flight and admitted to herself that she needed more time there—more time to prepare for the sad reality that awaited her in Brazil. **“Two more days won’t make a difference there, and here they will make a lot,”** she thought, and changed the flight to two days later.

The problem was that the situations didn’t align with the girl’s optimistic conduct: another day went by, and once again the boy called, made plans, then gave an excuse and canceled…

It was strange, as if it weren't him—it wasn't the same person, not that same gentle, caring, and loving Taurean. But the girl didn't understand; she preferred to think it was all in her own head, and with things spinning the way they were, she didn't cling to any facts. She simply listened to what the boy said, believed him, and thought: **"All right… I still have one day left, and in one day everything can change."**

She was determined to go back to the hotel and gather strength, as she usually did, with meditation and prayer, asking to forget anything that might be disturbing the energies there. She even began to feel very good and very light; she thought she had reached the nirvana and the peace she needed.

The next day—the last one—he called many times, apologized, and scheduled a dinner that night. Before that, they would go see a movie at the cinema. The night had everything to be perfect at last, just as it had been planned. The girl, once again happy and confident, left school early. But since the boy had said he would call by 7 p.m. if he managed to free himself, she didn't leave class at 7; she decided to stay and ask permission to leave at 11.

The boy said that if he didn't call by 11, he would meet her at 11:30 p.m. at her hotel. Kat then ran out of class, after getting a serious scolding and hearing a long lecture in class about actors who don't commit to their work. The teacher mentioned that Kat's mother was "dying" and that this was the only reason someone could leave class early, since it ended between 2 and 4 in the morning. The brave twenty students present there, already facing the snowstorm just to be there, listened attentively to everything the strict teacher said, while Kat died of embarrassment.

It was the first time she had gone through a situation like that; lack of discipline was something that didn't exist in her vocabulary—at least not there. But she thought she was doing the right thing; after all, she owed herself a bit of happiness, and happiness was waiting for her at the hotel.

As she left the class, already running through the snow, she wondered how a night could be so incredibly cold while her heart felt so warm at the same time. She decided to call the boy and tell him she was fifteen minutes away, like in the old days… She remembered the past and felt great.

“Hi! I just got out of class!” As she said this, she heard the clinking of glasses and plates, as if he were in a very noisy restaurant or bar.

The boy replied with an almost rehearsed brusqueness, like in a movie where the characters suddenly change personality without warning the audience:

“Ah, yes, uh… so,” he said, moving away from the table. **“I’m in Soho, I had to come here after the shoot, I couldn’t go there.”**

“What? Okay… all right… Then come here! I’ll wait for you.”

“Ah, well… I thought about it—it's already 11 at night, there won’t be time to see any movie at the cinema anymore.”

“Yes, I know,” she said, laughing. **“No problem, let’s get something to eat.”**

“No, but… at 11 there won’t be any restaurant open anymore… they won’t be serving food…”

“Yes, so come here and we’ll just stay here, it’s not a problem…”

“Oh, darling, didn’t you understand what I said?”

Only upon hearing that did Kat stop her fast walk along the frozen street. Now not a single muscle in her body moved; the only motion was the dense white air coming out of her mouth, formed by her heavy breathing.

“I’m in Soho,” the boy continued, **“right next to my place, and you’re on Broadway.”**

“Yes, so what?” she said, her heart already in her throat, almost blending into the mist.

“So what is that I’m too far away!”

“Far? You’re fifteen minutes away by car!”

“Yes, but there’s a snowstorm outside! The world is falling apart and it’s dangerous—there won’t be any taxis, for sure.”

“I know what the weather’s like! I’m walking on the street right now as I talk to you!”

“Look, darling, I have to go back to my table. There’s no reason for us to stay here arguing… I can see you’re already getting worked up, and today I don’t have the patience for that kind of behavior. The situation is very simple—no reason to yell: I have to wake up early tomorrow, and I don’t want to come all the way there and then have to go all the way back. If you want, then get a car and come to me—it’s the same fifteen minutes…”

“Okay… where are you?” At that moment, when everything already felt lost, she thought it was better to swallow the pride that was boiling together with the hatred in her chest and go meet him—not for him, but for herself, who had waited so many days and changed her flight for that meeting.

“Uh… actually I don’t know, I’ll have to ask the name of the place, and I’ll need to stay here for another hour… and then I have to wake up early, and you won’t be able to sleep at my place because early in the morning people will arrive to work there, so I don’t know if it’ll be worth it for you…”

“What?” Kat couldn’t believe anything she was hearing—not a word, not a comma, not a period… None of it made any sense. Suddenly she felt dizzy, with the sensation of having been betrayed. Her heart pounded in her chest as if it were about to stop, before the physical agony burst into a crying fit so painful and icy it would have made even the huge piles of snow around her—stacked along the entire curb—envious. She thought about hanging up the phone so the person on the other end wouldn’t witness her pain.

“What…” she said between sobs, already with a knot forming in her throat. **“Forget it…”** —and she quickly hung up the phone.

Her legs wouldn't obey; her joints and chest hurt so much that she had no choice but to crouch down on the ground. The tears fell with such force that she couldn't get air into her lungs. The cold already hurt her soul, and she was afraid she might die there. **"I have to get up,"** she thought, **"and walk another fifteen minutes in this cold, or I'll die here."**

She had already stayed still for too long, in such extreme cold that it was now hard even to feel anything. The tears froze on her face, yet she couldn't stop crying and had no voice to ask for help. Her chest was freezing from the cold, her hands had turned purple.

After many minutes in that state, she doesn't quite know how, she made it to the hotel and stepped under the shower with her clothes on and everything, unable to move, her hands stiff with cold. As soon as she managed to move them, she called her mother.

No one answered, which increased the girl's despair even more and made her, in sobs, ask forgiveness out loud, as if she could communicate with her mother from inside the hotel room—understanding that she had lost five more days there in that situation, in which she had thought only of herself, even if it had been to gather strength to return, even if she knew she wouldn't have managed without it.

But now an immense courage and certainty took over her chest. Family really was everything; no one else could be trusted. She had a terrible feeling that the boy had done all that to her as a kind of revenge, but she didn't want to believe it. Even after everything… after knowing her mother's situation… could he really be that malicious? Could a boy so good be capable of such a wicked plan of revenge because she had left him?

In the hours that followed, the boy, as if he had regretted something, began calling insistently. And Kat, her eyes soaked with tears, now once again thinking only about her mother, could barely see the phone screen. The boy's name appeared and disappeared on the display nonstop, as if it meant nothing anymore.

The hatred she now felt for him was so great—so overwhelming—that it no longer allowed her to feel any pain toward him; she simply felt awful. A horrible human being, for still being there while her mother was in her final days in the hospital…

“How could I, my God? How could I? Stop calling!” she said, already spiraling over the calls. **“Stop! Please, stop! I will never speak to you again!”** she said in a threatening tone. **“Never again! Never again!”**

At 4 a.m. she took the taxi that would take her to the airport, and, like a phoenix, despite her heart still aching with guilt over her mother and her chest hurting from a possible pneumonia, she felt happy and energized. For her own good, she decided that the last five days had never happened; she forced herself to forget everything and pretended she was boarding that flight from Los Angeles.

“These five days never happened—they’re going to be erased from the map of my life,” she said smiling to the taxi driver, who didn’t smile back. **“Exactly,”** she said, agreeing and joking about the driver’s bad mood.

And, as usual in life, she had created her own movie and moved on. She had already ordered balloons and flowers to take to her mother the next day; she could hardly believe she would finally be with her, and now, changed for the first time—now truly as a daughter—she could finally tell her the things she had never said before. And despite the situation, because of that she felt a surge of life energy, of something beginning, because it truly was beginning: it was the start of her relationship with her mother.

After many hours of flight, she had a very peculiar dream. As if her body were flying through a dark, star-filled night sky, her mother came flying toward her. When they met, the two of them “sat” in the sky, as if there were invisible floating sofas, as if they were outside the airplane where the girl slept.

They talked for what felt like hours, yet time could not be felt.

At times, the bodies of the two of them
transferred inside the airplane, where they could see the girl sitting in her seat, asleep. Their bodies were light as air, even though they felt they were walking in that plane as human beings and not in the world of "dreams"; yet neither of them seemed to mind the fact that they floated and walked through space talking, and that no one inside the airplane could see them.

When the girl woke up, sitting in the cold airplane seat, she felt complete joy; she was certain she had spent those last hours in her mother's presence. But when she realized that it had all been just a dream, and her mind began returning to reality, she murmured:

"Why did I just dream of your soul as if you were dead, if you're alive?"

And a great fear took over her spirit.

As she got off the plane, the airport was eerily empty and silent; it was already past two in the morning. In the distance, she then spotted the driver—the faithful friend who had worked with her for many years and who was now taking full-time care of her mother. Behind him were her sister and her husband. When she saw them, she smiled, thinking: **"Wow, this is the first time my sister has come to the airport to pick me up."**

And for the first time she felt good seeing her sister; she thought she wasn't alone in the world. After all, it had been years since she had seen so many family members together—considering that the driver was already family, there were three of them there. She was eager to ask her sister whether she could already go visit her mother; she was in a hurry.

"Hi!" she said, smiling, with the joy of someone who has just arrived.

"Mom died," her sister said, brushing the hair from her face and revealing a pale, expressionless face.

Kat's heart stopped. No words could be spoken, and before she could even organize the millions of feelings pulsing through her mind and control the blood rushing hot at full speed through her veins, her sister collapsed into a crying fit that felt as though it had a beginning—but no end.

And Kat's only reaction was to embrace her and say:

"Calm down, everything will be okay."

"She died a few hours ago; she couldn't wait for you," her sister said, leaving there what had been the mother's final feeling—an incessant, anguished waiting that would never reach its end, having waited five days for her beloved daughter to arrive from New York. The hug she never gave and the final thought of longing that would never be satisfied had certainly been for her.

The girl swallowed a pain that had no measure. She didn't want to show any emotion, and she couldn't think of anything; her mind had taken on the function of a plant—it merely subsisted. It didn't work. Her movements were automatic, and the girl went to her sister's room in shock.

Until a few hours later, when she was completely alone, she let the tears of guilt, pain, and longing flow. The same crying as her sister's, which seemed to have a beginning but no end. That sensation was terrifying, and at that moment—although no thought could be formed—the certainty that this pain would never pass was what made her body tremble and her throat close, as if her mind refused to believe it. There was no greater pain, no greater wound. There was nothing in the world that could compare to it.

She felt extremely alone. As if no one in the world, after that, would ever understand her. How would she now walk through the world with such pain, with such a burden, one that would drastically change her life? All moods, all smiles, all mornings—**everything** would change drastically, everything. Not even desires would be the same anymore… No. During that crying, she felt in her soul that a spiritual and mental surgery was being performed without anesthesia.

Her spirit would be marked forever with that horrible tattoo that everyone would be able to see as soon as she left the room—yet no one would understand. Only those who had lost their mother would understand, she thought—but no… not even them. Because who would understand a girl who grew up angry, without having a mother, and at the same time taking such care of her mother? Living and dying for her in dreams every day of her life, suffering deep depression in recent months, gathering the courage to go see her—and when she finally felt ready, losing her by so little… by a few hours… by a few whims… by so little love…

She then thought that, if it weren't for the boy, she wouldn't have lost at least her mother's farewell—she wouldn't have lost the chance she had unknowingly waited her whole life for: to ease her suffering and say *"I understand you."* But at no moment did she blame the boy; she blamed herself. She blamed herself for having made such ridiculous choices, for having been so small, so foolish, at such a crucial moment.

She never imagined it would happen on that very day… She never imagined that her decision to delay a flight—made without hesitation, in less than a minute—would cost her a lifetime of regret. And she was still so young to live forever with that memory, with those last five fateful days that would now be more present than ever in her mind. Those last days, completely wasted, waiting for nothing, while she could have been with her mother in the final days of her all-too-brief existence on Earth. It had been far too brief, and she had taken so little from all of it.

Only then did she realize that, because she had spent most of her life traveling, she could count on her fingers how many years she had truly spent by her mother's side.

She wanted to share that pain with someone, and in an unthinking act, she picked up the phone to call her mother—just as she had always done in recent years whenever something hurt.

Then, without understanding anything, with the number already being dialed, she remembered that the pain was precisely that. She would no longer be there… She would no longer be on the other end of the line to give her strength, or teach her to laugh at problems as she always had, and say it was nothing serious—and, without even realizing it, make her daughter sleep peacefully after hearing her comforting words, like a balm of peace for a soul aflame, burning with doubts.

No… she would no longer be on the other end of the line now to solve that problem, to calm her heart. She would no longer be there to ease the pain of that problem or any other; she would no longer be on the other end of the line now that she needed her so much—but the most painful pain of all was that she would not be on the other end of the line when she so desperately needed to hear her voice—neither now nor ever again.

“Life does not wait. Not for us to be ready to love. Not for us to be ready to say goodbye. The train of life simply goes. It passes, it happens, and if we don’t catch it at the moment it’s passing, we lose it.”

The next day, early in the morning, her father arrived at her sister’s house, forced by her to attend the funeral. Kat was in a state of shock, unable to think of anything or form words, yet she acted normally, as if nothing had happened. When her father entered the living room, she said:

“Hi, Dad, how are you?”

She asked as if nothing were happening, without realizing that she hadn’t spoken to her father in about ten years, and couldn’t even remember the last time she had seen him. She sat on the porch, outside, as if it were a normal day—yet completely empty inside; she felt so hollow that she didn’t understand how she could remain standing.

“How…” her father replied politely, perhaps referring to the absurdity of the *“how are you,”* since he was there precisely for the mother’s funeral.

“What did you do to your mouth? Your mouth looks bigger,” he said bluntly, as always changing the subject; Kat’s father never talked about anything serious.

“Nothing… I didn’t do anything,” the girl replied, as if she were talking to an old friend in a casual encounter at the park. **“I think it’s because I grew up…”** she continued, imagining that her father was noticing the changes in her face that had naturally occurred—from the girl he had known to the woman he was seeing now.

Looking into her father’s eyes, she was struck to see that they were blue, and, paying little attention to the trivial topics that arose, she could only think: **“Wow! Your eyes are blue?”** Her whole life she had thought her father’s eyes were green—mint green, very vivid—but then she realized a fact that sent a shiver through her: that until then she had never placed herself in front of him and looked into his eyes. **“I’ve never looked into my father’s eyes,”** she thought, with immense nostalgia, as if her entire life passed before her eyes in that instant—from her earliest moments as a little girl up to there, on that porch.

She looked to the side and saw the bright sun burning in that reddish-orange hour just before six in the morning. **“So different from yesterday,”** she thought, remembering the snow in New York, from which it seemed she had never truly left. On the clock, it was as if time had somehow stopped there, in that frozen hotel room, where, in her mental time machine, in the attempt to forget those five days, she had been left behind—stuck in a moment wrapped in time, from which she couldn’t escape. And that was the last reality her mind could remember.

Everything else that was happening now seemed like a macabre dream in which her spirit wandered in suffering, yet longed to return to the hotel room in New York, near the school, where she would be sleeping and would probably wake up to call her mother, as usual, or schedule yet another outing that would never exist with a vengeful Taurean.

And now that reality which had once seemed so bad, so repulsive, had become the sweetest dream to long for. She only wanted to go back in time—to any place where her mother still existed.

The day before now seemed incredible; it had changed, unintentionally and without any real change, drastically into the best day of recent times—the last day she walked the Earth without the unbearable burden of pain that caused constant asthma attacks, the last day of her full happiness, which, looking at life from the outside now, hadn't been so bad at all—it hadn't been bad at all.

If she had known, during those days of so much crying and pain in the hotel, that just one day later she would look back on that moment longing so deeply to return to it—longing so much for the unnoticed joy of walking in a world where misfortune, cold, and despair lived *outside* the soul, not inside it; where they were on TV, not etched into one's eyes.

If she had imagined that those days, so ignored before, would now be the last lived with human dignity—without that palpable self-pity that would never again abandon her—the last days in which her true joy of living still existed. And one fact, so little valued, which in those last days, as in the last years and decades, had made little difference, now echoed endlessly in her mind: **"It was the last day I was certain my mother was alive."**

Such a silly certainty—one that barely crossed her mind—had now become everything she lived and felt.

On the phone screen, the Taurean's name kept flashing without stopping, and the girl, her brain completely fried by everything, didn't even think of answering. Only hours later did she realize that he had found out about her mother's death through Facebook and had sent a message saying: **"Darling, please answer the phone… I'm so sorry, I didn't know."**

Kat then, in an impulsive act disconnected from reality, answered the phone and did nothing but beg the boy to stop calling.

The decision not to speak to him had been made in order to protect the boy himself, since Kat didn't want to unload all her anger, hatred, and guilt onto him—because she knew she would later regret it deeply. She no longer felt anything for him; it was as if all the love had frozen inside her chest that day in the snow, then melted under the shower and gone down the drain that same night. And now the love for the world and for everything in it seemed to be going the same way: down the drain. There wasn't a trace of love or anything good left for anyone in her heart.

"Hi," she said on the phone. **"Please, I beg you, I don't want to talk to you."**

"But darling, please, listen to me, I'm so, so sorry for everything… I was a terrible person and I had no idea…"

"Please, it doesn't matter anymore, I don't want to hear it… The pain now is much greater, I no longer care about what you may have done. Nothing matters to me… Please, just stop, leave me alone… Respect my pain. I have to go now. We will not see each other again, nor will we speak again… And I'm doing this for your own good—I don't want to say improper things to you."

Even with such a sincere request, however, the boy kept calling insistently for days. Kat's mind was so far away that she no longer remembered him, nor almost anything in the real world.

The weeks that followed were marked by very strange behavior. In a way, the girl's brain refused to live through the loss. She didn't go to the funeral, nor did she communicate with anyone in the family. It was Carnival in Brazil, and the girl went to parties that had been scheduled for months. She met up with friends and didn't tell anyone that her mother had died. When people asked how her mother was, she simply said she was fine and changed the subject.

The agency also called to ask about her mother, after a few weeks of the girl's disappearance, and received the same answer from her—and then a few more months of disappearance.

A few days after her mother's death, the girl decided to return to New York. She wanted to go back to the only place where she felt well—the **"black square"**: rooms all painted black, with blinding lights and teachers who screamed until they expelled every soul from the students, so they could strip it bare onstage without shame. That was the only place she wanted to be.

She couldn't get a room at the same hotel, but stayed at another very similar one, even closer to the school. Without realizing it, she developed the habit—an odd compulsion—of talking to her mother for hours every day as soon as she entered the room, cheerful and lively, as if her mother were on the other end of the phone. She would lie on the bed and tell her everything, as before, as always, as if nothing had changed… She told her about the Taurean, about the antics in class, and everything else.

However, strange events began to surround the girl after her mother's death.

In the very week of the death, her credit card was declined. When she investigated what had happened, she discovered that an old ex-boyfriend had bought airline tickets for himself and his current girlfriend, among other very expensive things, using her card. He had been doing this for months, and since the card had no limit, he had drained all the money from the account; the bills hadn't been paid for three months—which left her without money even to cover the expenses of her mother's funeral. She was informed that the money would never be reimbursed, because she herself admitted that she knew the person who had stolen it. And that ex, who until then had behaved like a close friend, never again responded to calls or emails.

Days later, she went out with friends and shared a salmon dish with them. What happened afterward is unknown, and why the salmon caused a reaction only in her; the doctors attributed the strange incident to the infection in her breast.

She spent days in bed, vomiting, with a fever of 40°C (104°F) and unable to move. Her joints and head hurt so badly from dehydration that she couldn't even move to get water from the bathroom sink, as she had been doing. Because of the debt at the hotel reception, a security guard broke down the door to the room, since there had been no news of the girl for five days. She was found on the bed, naked and motionless, and received first aid. She was fed and cared for by the hotel staff, who, like her, did not understand what was happening to her.

The months that followed were filled with pain and anger. She felt hatred toward everything and everyone and spoke to no one. She felt hatred especially toward the Taurean, who sent incessant messages, as if she would ever respond. Since she had already blocked him several times and had promised him she wouldn't block him again, she was holding herself back from breaking that promise. Since the day her mother died, she had become immoral, without value, without light… but not without her word. She still hadn't broken a promise.

Since the day of the death, she had also been accumulating several psychological problems, phobias, and panic attacks. The paranoia she had had since childhood had now taken on absurd proportions—she couldn't sleep at all in places larger than a 40-square-meter room. And she had developed the greatest phobia of all: being alone. But if she didn't like humans, how could she avoid sleeping alone? She needed them now, for the first time.

So she flew to Miami, where a man she wanted to sleep with lived, only to arrive there and realize that maybe it wasn't a good idea, see the boy, and dismiss him. Then she walked along Miami Beach for five hours, and did only that—twice a day, without thinking—for fifteen days, whether under scorching sun or in a tornado-like storm.

It was tornado season in Miami, and on stormy days she walked alone along the beach, under rain so heavy and lightning so bright it seemed intent on taking revenge on the human race. She walked with headphones on and carried three phones plus an iPod, so that when one ran out of battery she could plug in another. She left knowing she would walk all those hours, but on some days she walked even more—more and more each time.

She would leave at 4 a.m. and walk until the afternoon, then sit drenched by the rain and freezing cold to eat something on the street. Then she would return to the hotel, sleep, and as soon as she woke up, put on her running clothes—still wet—and go walk the same endless route again: the Miami beach boardwalk.

She would stop and sit on the dark, deserted sand of the beach, where the nearest person seemed to be thousands of kilometers away, and watch the moon kiss the sea at dusk and then move away from it, as if they had never known each other. Later she would return in the early hours of the morning and sit on the cold sand of the beach, with freezing winds, courting the giant, yellow full moon of that week.

She received messages from suitors scattered around the world while she sat alone on the sand and thought: **"Do they know? Do they know how alone we all really are in this world?"** She felt alone in the world because, as she had learned, we are born alone, we live alone, and we die alone; that was her perception of life.

With her headphones on, she was almost always listening to the radio—but there were days of five uninterrupted hours of Frank Sinatra, her favorite singer; and Sade, who had now also become her favorite singer, at least of everything she knew up to that point.

Everything she knew up to that point… that was something she thought about a lot too. It was as if everything she had lived until then had been a movie in which she had been playing the life of someone else the whole time; she could no longer feel anything for all those people who had been part of that past world.

Her mind was confused; she could barely remember them. Even her mother was now forgotten for brief moments. At other times, she forgot that her mother was dead—something that happened every morning, when the first thing she did was pick up the phone to call her.

Of all the music she listened to, only one band managed to make her cry—and that was when, by carelessness, the playlist landed on songs by **Charlie Brown Jr.**, her favorite band during adolescence. Those lyrics meant everything she truly was before all of this began—before that whole life of *others* began. They were from a time when she still thought only with her own head and had her own problems, before she started pretending she understood and fit in.

Those songs, like some by the band ***O Rappa***, were life to the girl—and now she cried because life was death, and so the songs were death. It was as if every time she listened to one of them she faced life once more, and for that reason died a little more each time, in an increasingly painful way. But it was an addictive pain, one she replayed for hours sometimes, until she could no longer bear crying for herself.

And the most incredible thing was that, in front of other people, she had a cold and distant posture, so empty of any feeling that she had a reputation for being insensitive—which was a source of conflict with her sister, who wouldn't accept it. Her sister, perhaps because she was a Pisces, felt everything too much, like Kat; but unlike Kat, she showed everything she felt—and out of sheer misjudgment, unable to feel empathy in that regard, Kat wouldn't admit that her sister felt deeply as well…

Her mother's life insurance had been paid out, and a large sum of money had landed in her account. It brought no feeling whatsoever to the girl, but it made her new lifestyle easier—the lifestyle of not thinking about anything.

Not thinking about anything—just being. The life insurance had been a tremendous stroke of luck. By chance, and by the insistence of her sister's husband, who was a life-insurance salesman, it had been taken out just a few months before her mother's illness was discovered.

Thus, the sisters arranged the insurance for their mother, but Kat's policy was much larger, with a payout twice as big, because her greatest fear was dying and leaving her mother helpless. The policy in the mother's name, with Kat as the beneficiary, had been done reluctantly, at the mother's insistence. The sister also took out a separate policy for herself, and said that her mother's last words—after she had gathered the strength to speak—were:

"Enjoy your lives. Travel. Live. Don't worry about anything. Use the money to travel and have fun. Forget problems and worries. Enjoy your lives… They are far too short…"

Kat no longer knew what it meant to enjoy life; now she simply surrendered to the whims of her phobias and her neediness. She slept with men from her past—men she had once paid no attention to—just to fill the voids, and then, for no reason, disappeared again. She decided not to return to her home in Los Angeles, because there was no one there she trusted, and went instead to France to stay in the homes of acquaintances—people with whom she had spent only a few hours before and who were now already family.

For months she moved from house to house, slept in couples' beds alongside the women of the house, on living-room floors, on sofas… And the only thing she did were long walks to nowhere, everywhere she stayed. She walked through Paris from neighborhood to neighborhood, stopped in parks to watch the sunset, then walked again—until she couldn't anymore, until her feet or knees gave out. Early in the morning or in the middle of the night, at any hour of day or night, she followed no rules of sleep or eating—she just walked.

She no longer belonged to any world.

Not even her own.

By that point, it felt as though with every kilometer she walked, a large piece of her past was left behind, falling from her shoulders; with each kilometer she felt lighter. She no longer knew how to answer questions about who she was, or where she was, much less where she was going—she wasn't going anywhere, she was simply *being*. She was where she was, and the next second had no idea where she would be.

She took on absolutely no responsibility. Her sister handled everything that arrived in her name and everything she could, without even informing her, since it took days—often weeks—for Kat to respond to any message, and voice calls had become completely impractical. The bills for the Los Angeles apartment that were not on automatic debit simply piled up in the mailbox, without the girl having thought about them even once.

She invited one acquaintance and then another to live in her Los Angeles apartment, so that when she returned there she would have company and be able to live, she thought. But she had no desire at all to return. She even stayed for a few days, but after realizing that no physical or psychological treatment seemed to work, she decided to return to Europe.

She wanted to go to India and check herself into a monastery, but since she couldn't go alone, she spent hours trying to convince acquaintances and even strangers to go with her, without success. Amid all of this, there were still the modeling jobs—those already scheduled—that she couldn't fail to attend. She traveled the world, did photo shoots, and clients noticed the *"look of sadness."* She no longer knew what to do; no matter how much she pretended to have no worries and spent 24 hours a day focused solely on trying to appear happy, her eyes carried a deep sadness.

Soon she began to lose jobs because of it, which made her fall even more easily into a path of spirituality she still had no idea about—a completely new world.

During that period, she was making a film in the French capital—a teaser that, before her mother died, she had planned to present in Cannes. And the long-awaited exhibition of the artist Lorenzo Quinn, with gigantic, perfect stone sculptures that took up to two years to carve—one of the most anticipated days for her and her mother—now took place without meaning. Even that, even that beautiful and long-awaited day, life had taken from her, she thought.

Cannes, too, was a fiasco. The film crew, led by the director, swindled Kat and the writer, holding the footage hostage and demanding five times the originally agreed amount to release it. Five months of work and the investment of thousands of dollars went down the drain—and with it, Cannes as well.

The girl was now there, at the height of the festival, just a few months after her mother's death, in the midst of all her insanity, with no material in hand to present and therefore no reason to be there. It was her first episode of depressive psychosis. She no longer wanted to be herself; she no longer wanted to live in the world. She was afraid of the world and everything in it. Her friends and acquaintances betrayed and robbed her deliberately. Everyone who crossed her path now took as much advantage of her as they could. And each time that happened, the girl was left behind—more apathetic, more hopeless. She had become dry land. What had once been a forest rich in blessings and good fortune was now arid, infertile ground. Nothing grew there. It was as if the girl's inner world and her life had become a vast desert.

In a dream:

"Why are you crying?" said the Voice.

"Who are you? And where are you? I can't see you!"

"I am whoever you want me to be, and I am wherever you want to be. Where do you want to be, and who do you want me to be?"

"Where? I want to be exactly where I am… It isn't the place that afflicts me—it's the people in it, as always."

Then everything opened into a white expanse, and she was back in the hotel room in Cannes—but her body did not appear sleeping on the bed; it was as if she were speaking and everything were happening in real time. In the dream, she didn't know she was asleep.

"And who do I want you to be?" the girl continued. **"No one! I don't miss anyone and I don't want to talk to anyone!"**

"Your life is a reflection of your inner world."

"What?"

"That's why you cry. Because your efforts are being suffocated by great unfavorable events, and even your victories are being smothered by acts of injustice—and that makes you even more bitter."

"Yes!"

"However, you became this way because the bitterness came first. And what about trusting, which I have always spoken to you about? And all the teachings I sent you? Have you forgotten all of them?"

"What teachi—" before she could finish the question, thousands of memories—books, songs, voices, people, everything—all the divine and life wisdom that had been taught to her until then passed through her mind again.

"All the teachings I gave you—what do you think they are for? Just to decorate the subconscious? No… They exist precisely to help you overcome moments of greater difficulty, like this one. Everything you have been taught up to now was meant to support you and help you in your purpose, and the path you are on is part of that purpose. You must go through it, but you do not need to do so feeling this way! The path is the same, the situation is the same, but the pain, the discomfort, and all the confusion you create are your responsibility. It is your choice; it has nothing to do with me. But I have given you wisdom up to this point, daughter… I have prepared you up to here," said the Voice, in a tone of disappointment. And it continued:

— **Why do you turn against me now?** And against the world I created? And, at the same time, why do you allow the world to treat you this way? The world gives you what you accept. You are having what, deep down, you think you deserve. And you let yourself be carried away… You let yourself be lost and no longer wish anything good for yourself. You became an object, an empty sack drifting without purpose — and *your* purpose is so beautiful, so full, so certain. There is no error in your purpose, nor any pettiness. There has been no pettiness at all up to this point. No matter how much you judge, everything was given to you — a world with open hands so that you could take from me and from the Universe I created as much as you needed and as much as you believed you deserved, whenever you wanted; so why, then, don't you take it? Why do you give up, deciding that you deserve so little? That's not what I programmed for you… That's not what we agreed on… That's not what I agreed on with any of you. Your strength is not in the events around you, nor in the people who surround you and who, by hurting you, take away your hope; **your strength is in me!** And therefore it is in you! I live inside you — we are one and the same.

At that moment, a bright and very strong light appeared inside the girl's chest, illuminating the entire room, which made her look down to check what it was.

— *I* — continued the Voice — *live here* — it said, referring to the girl's chest, now illuminated. — If you are hurt, you hurt me, and at the same time, if you grow greater, you make me greater. Your strength is in you, just like everything else you may need at any time and in any situation. It is here.

And whenever it mentioned the light, it shone even more strongly.

The Voice, which now spoke with a masculine, somewhat deep timbre, had a sad and disappointed tone, yet inspired a feeling of great strength.

— Those people who hurt you are not you; they have nothing to do with your purpose, so why do you allow them to change you? Why do you let them dictate what your day will be, what your—life will be?

— **You have nothing to do with them; you have to do with me**, who am you; you have to do with yourself. How can you do yourself good if you allow yourself to be harmed so deeply? Your life is a reflection of the energetic state of your soul. Everything around you, everything happening out there, is what you carry inside. Why, then, do you allow so much anger, so much bitterness to enter you? Don't you see how this poisons your day? Why do you allow it? There will be many testing situations in the world, many situations you will not like; but you must promise me that you will **never again give up on yourself**! As for your present afflictions, cleanse your soul and the mists of confusion that populate your life will dissipate. Change your rebellious behavior into one of trust, and your joys will be abundant. Happiness does not depend on the difficulties you go through, but on how you deal with them. It is possible to be happy at every moment of your life, without interruption, and that is why I made you this way. The secret of life lies in always paying attention to the good things. There will always be many gains within difficulties, sometimes even more gains than pain, and you must seek to see that. You must try to appreciate sunny days, the singing of birds, the colors of nature, and see that the world goes far beyond your difficulties. Focus only on what is good and on what brings good, until they pass, and—like everything else—these difficulties will pass as well. Solve problems with your eyes turned toward the beauty of life. You must understand once and for all that, in life, you go through needs and difficulties, but **your life IS NOT THE DIFFICULTY ITSELF**. You must know how to separate the problem itself from life as a whole, and you will see that in any and every situation it is possible to choose the good things, as well as everything that happens outside your state of despair. The experience of life is something beautiful and grand in wisdom, and your problems are merely problems. There is no stage of life that is **only** problematic. There is no phase that is **only** difficult. Even in difficulty there is ease; even in a problem there is a solution… There is only you —yourself choosing to see the situation as a single-celled being, while everything is a multicellular organism.

[Translator's note: "ser de célula única" vs. "organismo multicelular" is a metaphor suggesting a limited, isolated perspective versus a complex, interconnected whole.]

— **When the feeling of hopelessness arrives** — continued the Voice — instead of letting yourself drown in it, go out into the world, go outside, and let the nature I created inspire you. Let it show you the greatness that exists within you, and you will once again understand that the immensity of the skies, the strength of the seas, and the power of the winds are derived from the same nature as you — and that you have power equal to theirs, and to everything else you see in nature. Go inward, and you will see beauty beyond your habit of judging yourself ignorant of your own situation. Go inward calling for me, and in that moment I will lend you my eyes so that you may see yourself as I see you; and you will see how perfect and loved you are, and you will be certain that there is nothing to fear, for you will know that no evil is greater than the good I created for you, no shadow is greater than the **LIGHT** I created within you, and no difficulty is greater than the beauty of your path, designed and handwritten by me.

Upon hearing this, the girl woke up. She looked around the spacious bedroom of an old apartment building where she was staying in Cannes and noticed that the two large glass windows were still closed. Even after almost fifteen days of staying there, they had never been opened and were covered by thick, double curtains. When she got up, before any thought could even arise in her mind, she went to the windows, opened the thick, heavy curtains, and saw the sun pour in brightly, illuminating the entire room. Every corner of the room now held sunlight — even the small fitted kitchen and the bathroom. She looked around the whole room, now filled with shimmering dust particles floating in the air from the movement of the curtains, and exclaimed:

— **It's beautiful!**

And, seeing beauty even in a grain of dust that had been there all that time — and whose existence she had not even known until then — she closed her eyes, feeling the warmth of the sun bathing her skin, energizing her, and for the first time in a long while, she felt complete peace and stillness.

Not a silence of the surroundings, but a stillness of the soul — a tranquility that came from complete trust in everything and, at the same time, in nothing. She did not know what gave rise to that strong feeling of confidence; she simply felt it.

She decided to check her emails and, upon noticing all the discordant messages coming from the film's directing team, she replied simply that they could keep it. That it no longer made any difference; that they could withhold the footage, as they had been threatening to do, and that through that email she was declaring that not another cent would be invested, that that would be the last email, and that from that moment on any and all communication between the parties would be cut off. She did not block the address and saw many emails arriving quickly after that, but she neither grew distressed nor felt curious enough to open any of them — she trusted.

She accessed her phone messages and, after weeks, replied sparingly to all of her sister's messages. She listened to messages from acquaintances and party and event organizers who had filled her phone with invitations and then with complaints because she had not been showing up to anything — not even to meetings she herself had scheduled. She decided it was better not to attend, since she did not have the material — the films — in hand. But then, suddenly, Kat decided to respond and to go to all of them. She decided she would put a smile on her face and cloak herself in good energy, and would humbly explain what had happened to her regarding the film. *"After all, they're all human,"* she thought. *"Maybe they'll understand my situation."*

And after attending the parties, the meetings, and the gatherings, she discovered that many of them had already gone through the same situation, and instead of judging her as foolish and disorganized, as she had thought they would, they encouraged her to lift her head and move forward. They pointed out the fact that she was very young — *"but that doesn't mean anything,"* they said. *"You're never too old to be taken advantage of."*

They said that this would be just one of the many lessons she would have in the profession she had chosen, and that it was no different from any other profession, which people imagine to present difficulties but which, in truth, are all challenging — and that even if she chose another path, she would still be susceptible to going through the same things. She simply needed to face it and move forward, without spending too much time on it.

She felt a little lighter and held to the decision to cut the matter off right there; after all, where evil is not communicated, it does not spread. Just as light spreads when it is shared, evil does as well. She therefore decided not to speak not only about the film case, but about no evil that afflicted her at all; she began to focus only on what was good and what brought good.

And so it was that, by chance, without explanation — from party to party, in environments that had nothing to do with the spiritual field, so to speak — she began to meet people, and from person to person she ended up arriving at her most beautiful and unexpected path. One fact that always made her think was that the “worst” people — those most vile and who wished her the most harm, or who were selfish — ended up introducing her to the “best” people. Without logical explanation, these good and bad people, with good and bad intentions, led the girl exactly to where she needed to be in order to find Peace and ALL the answers she needed…

CHAPTER 12

He writes straight along straight lines;
it is we who see wrongly.

It was at one of those parties in Cannes that Kat met a producer of suspicious conduct, who seemed more interested in taking advantage of the girl's naïveté. Without suspecting him — or perhaps suspecting him, yet now **TRUSTING** that everything had a greater plan behind it — and judging events less as bad, she thought only that no matter what happened to her, she carried within herself a certainty, coming from "nowhere," that everything would happen for the good.

The address of the party was in Monaco, and she did not feel comfortable there, so she decided to call acquaintances who, since it was Formula 1 awards season, would all be in the city. As her phone stubbornly refused to work, she suggested to the suspicious producer that they go for a walk, hoping to run into someone she knew in the city center. Then, distractedly, she bumped into a young man she barely knew, at the door of a nightclub. Kat did not like nightclubs and was not much into parties, but the boy said that something special was happening at that venue that day — some kind of specific celebration — and that because of this he would not be able to let the suspicious producer inside, only her.

[Translator's note: "Escreve certo por linhas certas, nós é que vemos errado" is a poetic phrase often attributed to popular wisdom, implying that life unfolds correctly, but human perception misinterprets it.]

The girl, not wanting to *leave the man high and dry* [*lit.* "a ver navios," an idiom meaning to abandon someone or leave them waiting], insisted, but her request was not granted; thus, she ended up going in alone, first saying goodbye to the man after more than two hours of conversation at the door. However, as it was already past two in the morning, she did not feel so guilty — especially because this was her last day in the city, and very early she would already be heading back to the hotel and it would be time to go "home."

In truth, the festival was over and she had nowhere to return to. She had no place she could call home and had not yet decided what she would do next. What she truly wanted was to find spiritual retreats — places where she could withdraw and only leave when her mind was back in order. She thought she would only find such places in India, and she was determined to go there, but at that moment she had only a return ticket to Paris and no plan, nor any definite place to stay.

Inside the nightclub, the acquaintance placed her in the small booth next to the DJ and asked her to stay there, where there was no one besides the DJ and a young man in his thirties. *"Stay here, I need to get the wristbands that will allow you to come with me into the VIP area, but don't leave here — I'll be right back,"* he said, afraid they might get lost inside the stupidly overcrowded venue. So she stayed there alone, not knowing what to do or where to look, until the young man, who was also in the booth behind the DJ, turned toward her:

— Hi! My name is… — and the sound grew loud, preventing her from understanding his name.

— Hi! My name is Kat! — she shouted, trying to overcome the volume of the music. — Kat! K–A–T, Kat!

— Ah! Kat? — said the man, understanding what she had said despite the music. — Do you know who this DJ is? He's very famous! And we're very happy to have him here!

— No… I'm sorry… I don't really know DJs, but I'm sure he must be great — it looks like people are loving it — she replied, looking at the crowd around her, all dressed in white, with expensive champagne on the tables.

— You seem to be the only person at the party who isn't dressed in white! Why are you wearing black at a white party?

— Oh! It's a white party! — the girl exclaimed. — Now it makes sense that everyone's in white — and she laughed to herself.

— Yes! — said the man, laughing as well. — What are you doing here?

— Well… I'm an actress… and everything started from there! But, to be honest, I don't know if I should be here — she said, shouting into the man's ear.

— Hey! We're never in the wrong place! We're always exactly where we're meant to be — the man replied, in a gentle yet serious voice that struck her as very grounded, which impressed the girl.

— You're not drinking?

— No! I don't drink… I'm Indian, and I'm very religious. In my religion, it's rare to see followers who drink alcohol.

That made her curious. She loved Indians, felt a strong affinity with the culture, not to mention that India had been on her mind almost 24 hours a day, and all she wanted most was to be there.

— India! India — did you say!?

— Yes, India! I'm from India! — the man shouted, thinking she hadn't heard him because of the music.

— And it's my dream to go there! We need to talk! I want to know everything about India and the country's spirituality. I'm at a moment right now when all I'm seeking is to spiritualize myself and learn a way of seeing life with different eyes. Seeing it through mine hasn't served me very well…

— What are you waiting for here? Let's go to the table — we can talk better there; the sound is too loud here.

— I'm waiting for my friend to come back with the wristbands; I can't go in there!

— Here — said the man, pulling a handful of white wristbands from his pocket and handing one to her. — **I'm the owner of this nightclub.**

One of the owners and the partners decided to throw this party to promote one of our brands. We're all going to Ibiza tomorrow, on a very spiritual trip. You should come with us — you would like it!

— **Ibiza?!** No… not a chance! I don't like Ibiza! — the girl replied immediately, remembering the party scenes and drug situations she had already seen there, which she hadn't liked at all.

— But how can you not like Ibiza? Ibiza is a very spiritual place, you know? It's just that people have spoiled it — but the most spiritual people I know still live and gather there.

— In Ibiza? No way! There's only partying and drugs there, and I'm against drugs. All kinds of them — and I'm against people who use them too; I don't like to mix with them.

— Look, first of all, without meaning to contradict you — after all, I've known you for ten minutes — but I can give you a piece of advice I learned in life, and because I'm older than you I feel obligated to say this: if you are on a spiritual quest, as you say; if you truly want answers and want to see beyond your eyes, you must stop judging. **Non-judgment is the beginning of any spiritual awakening.**

— No, no… of course — the girl said, somewhat flustered, yet maintaining her position regarding drugs and their users. — That's not quite what I meant… I'm actually someone who judges very little…

— Little is already enough for blindness to take hold. You must judge nothing if you truly want to see and understand beyond what you understand now, for many of your paradigms will be broken, many of your certainties will be drastically challenged and proven wrong before your own eyes — and worst of all, by yourself. So you must be ready for that.

As soon as he said this, with a very serious expression, lost in his thoughts, as if speaking about himself — about experiences of his own spiritual awakening — the girl burst into loud laughter.

— *Hahaha, you talk funny!* — said the girl, as if what the man had just said made no sense at all. It really didn't — at least not in her mind…

— But what are you laughing at? I'm telling the truth… And if you follow this path, you'll see that I'm right. Where is your friend? — the man asked, looking for the young man amid the crowd.

— I don't know! He's not my friend; I've only seen him a few times in nightclubs in Milan, when I lived there — that was years ago… To tell you the truth, I don't remember his name, and I'm embarrassed to ask you yours again — I don't remember it anymore…

— Then come with me; I'll take you to my friends' table. Actually, tonight all the tables here are my friends', because this party is private. It wasn't open to the public today.

— Wow! All these people are your friends? — the girl exclaimed, astonished, perhaps because she felt she had none.

— Yes! All of them… — and the man walked past the tables, briefly and quickly mentioning where each person was from (which country), where they had met, how they had ended up there, why they were there, and so on.

— Wow! You can explain your friends and each one's intentions better than I can talk about myself! Incredible! — said the girl, genuinely impressed.

After passing by several tables of boys and girls, men and women, and talking to everyone, the girl reached the almost absurd confirmation that all those people, from many different parts of the world, were truly good. Each person she met there left her impressed.

Everyone — despite appearances — spoke of spirituality and spiritual growth. The girl could not believe the coincidence and the luck. Once again, "luck"; without realizing it, she was living the first day of what she understood as "luck" after a long time. This happened two days after the first time she had opened the windows at the hotel, and it was all she could remember — that is, if she were paying attention to the facts, but she wasn't even doing that…

She was sitting there at that table, as usual observing people, and speaking with many of them with genuine interest. Interest was something she believed had also died within her, for she had not been interested in practically anything for a long time — and now she found herself there, interested again, curious. She especially wanted to know about the Indian man's religion, who now insisted on taking her to all his friends so that they could convince her to go to Ibiza.

"It's a really nice house," they said. *"His whole group is very spiritual. You'll love being with them — they're truly magical people."*

— What's your zodiac sign? — Kat asked the Indian man, as she usually did as soon as she met someone.

— I'm a Virgo.

Upon hearing that, she began to think. Because she understood astrology well, she knew the characteristics of the sign, and so she judged that the man probably did not have a habit of lying or being promiscuous — behaviors not commonly associated with Virgo.

— Where do you have to go tomorrow? — the man continued, still on his mission to convince the girl. — What do you have to do tomorrow that's so important that you can't come with us to Ibiza? Is it a work matter?

And now the man had asked *"the question."* Where would she go, and for what, what would she do after that? She still hadn't thought about it — and didn't want to think.

— I don't know — she replied honestly. — I actually don't have anywhere to go, but tomorrow I'll certainly decide on some place, and that will be the right place — continued the girl, who lived in the moment, and only the moment.

— I still have at least two weeks free, until my next work commitment. And even that isn't 100% confirmed yet.

— Then come with us! Come! You won't regret it. We're going on a private plane that we're renting, and there are still empty seats on the flight! It won't cost us anything — neither us nor you. And if you don't like it, I promise I'll buy your return ticket, and it will be as if nothing ever happened.

The girl thought, and thought, and thought. She had no desire whatsoever to go to a house full of strangers; she didn't like parties or social buzz and, above all, she didn't like people! Every time she had traveled like that — to a house where she had to remain confined with other people — she had ended up arguing and getting very irritated. She was strange, she thought; she wouldn't be able to get along with others. She hadn't managed to until then — why would it be any different now?

— I can't! — she said, deciding to tell the truth. — I may seem like a nice person, but I'm extremely annoying and antisocial! I'm not capable of staying in a house with lots of people for an entire weekend and leaving happy… I know it's a horrible thing, but it's the truth.

— Look, to be honest, neither am I! In fact, I thought about going, but I'm going to rent an apartment in the city in case things get too noisy, or too many different people join the group. The house and the company are the best, but I know the place will also be rented out for parties, and people of all kinds will be there. So don't worry — if you don't want to stay in the house, you can stay in the apartment with me; it has three bedrooms.

She thought about it and came to the conclusion that that very kind man would not harm her. In fact, she was enjoying talking to him very much, because he had a unique and clean energy — like a white aura of good intentions, not only there, in relation to her, but as if, in the colors of his aura, it were imprinted that he was not accustomed to doing harm to anyone.

— *Oh my God!* — said the girl, smiling. — Could it be?

— The flight leaves at 9 a.m. Where are you staying?

— At 9? — she looked at her watch; it was already past 4 a.m. — But that's in four hours! And I'm in Cannes — it's an hour's drive from here! And I still have to pack all my bags… I have three bags weighing 30 kilos each.

— Thirty kilos each? — the man exclaimed, smiling.

— Yes! I've been traveling for many months already… — she said with a hint of sorrow, remembering her mother, but she did not say why, nor did she dwell on the subject.

The girl went back to the hotel, packed as quickly as she could, and, with her phone not working, they agreed only that she would go and that she would be at the airport on time — and that was all that sealed the agreement between the two regarding the trip. Neither did the girl know whether the man was lying, nor did he know whether she would actually be at the airport or not…

But a few hours later, there she was, with the three gigantic suitcases.

ANNOUNCEMENT

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THESE WORDS WAS A SUPERNATURAL EVENT.
"Of course," you must be thinking, "this is a prank — it has to be." **BUT IT IS NOT.** At 1:00 p.m. on July 17, 2016, a Sunday, I — the author of the book — was sitting with my computer on my lap, typing the second half of the book, which would be around 350 pages long. That was when all the words on the screen turned into asterisks. Before my eyes, **ALL** the words of the book turned into stars, and then, little by little, the more than 240 pages already written — around 120,000 words — began to be erased, one by one.

The word count is displayed at the bottom of the screen, and that number began to drop **terrifyingly fast** before my eyes, as if an unidentified force had entered the computer. This was not the product of imagination, nor of medication, nor of alcohol or any kind of hallucinogen. I was completely sober, as I always am, and fully awake. I did not press any key that could have resulted in such a situation, and the computer — a latest-generation Mac — had been purchased two months earlier and had never been connected to Wi-Fi anywhere other than my home in California. And this part of the book was being written in Brazil…

After consulting several computer technicians, both in Brazil and in the United States, it was determined that what had occurred was impossible and entirely inexplicable. To this day, no one knows what happened; all that is known is that about **40 pages** of this book disappeared — with the computer on my lap, on the bed…

Keeping in mind that the author of this book believes that coincidences do not exist, and that everything happens for a greater reason, this event could never be ignored, nor could it be rewritten.

In those 40 pages were accounts of events that could be described as having **supernatural origins**…

When I realized the exact passage that had been erased, I was truly left with my hair standing on end. And also very sad, because it was precisely the section that clearly explained the entire unfolding of life and how the girl began to hear the Voice while finally being awake — until all the traumas and blindness were healed, leading her to the days of peace and acceptance of today — thus inspiring other people to believe that God truly speaks to everyone, and that it is possible to converse with Him during the day, in full consciousness, and without the use of drugs.

But perhaps all of this will already make itself understood over the course of the book. Perhaps I have already bored you with so much information and so many experiences from my personal life. Perhaps those 40 pages were no longer necessary — perhaps because now it is time for **YOU** to rewrite them with your own stories of victory.

Lacking a better option, the author decided that the book would continue only with a very succinct conclusion of the most pertinent situations told throughout the book.

CHAPTER 13

From darkness to the full light of understanding

It is necessary to love people
As if there were no tomorrow
Because if you stop to think about it
In truth, there isn't

"Pais e Filhos" | Legião Urbana
[Translator's note: "Pais e Filhos" ("Parents and Children") is a well-known Brazilian song by the band Legião Urbana, often associated with themes of love, family, impermanence, and existential reflection.]

Through different methods of spiritual seeking (both conventional and non-conventional), in various countries, after two years of a life entirely devoted to self-knowledge and approximately one year living in spiritual retreats, the girl was able to encounter the Voice while awake. It was as if a portal had been opened by herself, through spiritual seeking and understanding. It was as if her own mind had been opened, and she could see and hear beyond what the human mind believes itself capable of.

For this reason, the Voice led her to places from the past — moments when she was awake and moments in dreams — and thus she was able to see various scenes from her life and witness the exact moments in which she received divine lessons, such as when she recounts her dreams in this book, and also when the Voice used people and situations to show her what she did not understand or stubbornly insisted on ignoring. Only after having conversations and visions with the Voice while awake — the same as those she had while dreaming — did she truly understand all of this; and now she communicates with the Voice daily, receiving lessons and passing them on.

Led by the Voice to other dimensions and lives, the girl was able to understand every event, every misfortune, every pain, every lack of forgiveness, and every conflict in her life. Each person had treated the girl in a certain way. **EACH ONE** had a reason, and each had been seen and experienced in a completely natural manner, shown live by the Voice, which now spoke with the girl while she was awake, during the day — and which had finally been recognized and accepted as something normal and commonplace.

Among the thousands of **MESSAGES** the girl received from the Voice during a period of complaints about the difficulties of life, this was one of them:

… Just as you once believed, when you were a child, that your mother hated you when she was merely brushing your hair; just as you thought those tangles would never end, and that seemed like a very great difficulty at the time — so is life. So it is with all of life's problems. Nothing is truly what it seems, and above all, no problem is as complicated or insurmountable as it appears. You are still a child; you will always be a child before the events of life. See it this way, and remember the situation with your mother and the knots in your hair: you thought there was no way out, your mentality was that that problem was the greatest that could exist, because for you it truly was very big at that moment, in your reality — yet it was not. It passed; you grew up and faced all your problems; you only forgot that they are like knots in a child's hair.

The ones of now will pass as well, as soon as you understand their meaning. Just as it was with the situation of the knots — when you understood the meaning, and why it was happening, you stopped feeling anger and understood that it was only a phase. The ones of now will be as well, as soon as you understand their meaning, as soon as you understand why they are happening and hurting you; instead of blaming others or the world, they too will stop hurting, they too will make sense and will pass, leaving behind only learning and experience. The obstacles of life, once understood, are already **50% resolved**, and the other 50% consists only of trusting and continuing to live with joy afterward.

About the death of the mother

The girl was with her mother a few months after her death, together with the Voice, and, while awake, was able to go back in time and be inside her mother's body on her last day of life. She saw exactly what happened to her and confirmed that she felt no pain and had always been supported by the **LIGHT**, in every moment of death and beyond death; that she had not suffered, and that the message of the Voice was: *"In the world, of the world, nothing is lost — everything transforms."* This marked the beginning of the end of her problem with anger toward the world. The feeling of injustice that had hardened her heart, that had expelled love from within her since her mother died and turned her life into an eternal wake, began to be broken that day. All the sadness of a loss had now been transformed into knowledge. She still missed her mother, but now much less, for she saw that her mother in truth lives, and that it would be extremely selfish to think that she had an obligation to remain there because of her daughter or anything else remaining on Earth. She saw that her mother had simply followed her path and was now going through a phase of learning, just as she had on Earth — but now on another plane.

She understood death so deeply that the anger and resentment toward God and toward life were gradually replaced by a constant laughter at herself, as if, under the influence of the Voice, she were able to see herself from the outside and recognize her ignorance regarding yet another subject — an ignorance that little by little was being dissipated.

About the father

As for him, one night it was revealed to her… The girl, without understanding, entered the body of a child — a frail little boy with large, light-colored eyes, deep and sad. She went through pain and horrible things that she could never have understood if her father had merely told her about them — something he likely never would have done. After spending several years inside that person, watching him grow in accelerated motion, she was able to see that the child was her father. She cried, for the only desire she felt was to embrace and care for that child deprived of love and care. Her father's story was one of the saddest she had ever lived. Her mother had already partially told her the sad story of his childhood and adolescence, but nothing that truly made her understand it the way living it in the flesh did.

Her father's lack of soul experience greatly intensified his suffering, and only by going through everything in his skin was she able to understand him and forgive him for everything. She learned that a poor child, having lived the life he had and having endured all the hardship he had faced since birth, being a soul still so immature, could not have managed to behave in any other way. He truly had done the best he could, even if his best was so little. Kat's hatred for her father ceased, and nowadays she speaks to him with love and sorrow for all the years of hatred and fighting; however, he has still not "recovered" from the traumas of the past and continues to struggle with alcoholism. But, like all of us, he is growing and has the right to take as much time as he needs to find himself.

It was understood that the illness the girl had in her breast was a reflection caused by the problem she had had with her father throughout her life. Through the illness, life was telling her that that situation needed to be resolved, because judgment and resentment were causing her pain, diverting her from her path — and the illness, although brutal, was in fact the fastest and least painful way to make her see everything. It was thanks to the illness that she began to seek her spiritual fulfillment, and the peace she feels today would never have been found if it had not been for the illness. It was the worsening of the illness that made her seek healing, and the non-conventional healing was what led her to find the healing of the soul. On the very same day that the “encounter” with her father-as-a-child occurred, the bacterium was eradicated, once again leaving doctors holding a miracle, without explanation.

About the illness

The bacterium in the breast, through learning with the Voice, was eradicated. Thus, the girl became the only person to walk the Earth for months with the bacterium and survive, and also the only person in the world to manage to heal without surgical intervention. Her case, with her permission, was taken to the highest medical council in London so that infectious disease specialists could study it. After the bacterium was eliminated, surgery was performed in order to repair the damage it had caused. There were three years living while ill, with the bacterium alive in her body, whose presence was proven by tests carried out almost monthly and sometimes even daily. The surgery had only a reparative purpose; however, the worst was discovered: the damage caused by the flesh-eating bacterium was far greater than what the MRI scans had shown. Part of the left breast, along with the silicone implant, had to be removed, and the girl had to live with “only one breast” for a period of six months. This made her see the world from a completely new perspective — and one far more incredible than she had imagined possible.

The Voice, as always, teaching her that the lessons and blessings of life come in all shapes and sizes — even in those that are "subtracted." Great life lessons were learned during those six months, and they too would never have been possible if it had not been for that event.

The side of her torso had become gangrenous because of complications from the bacterium and the infection in the breast. This was the only lasting consequence, aside from some scars, left by the illness — which keeps the girl under medical supervision, since there is the possibility of recurrence (according to medical reports), due to the fact that the bacterium is highly resistant and there are cases in which it was eliminated and later reappeared in the patient many years afterward, for not having "died" completely. Yet even the area affected by gangrene is miraculously "coming back to life"… another "miracle" the doctors cannot explain.

This and other physical healings are explained in the books of a Brazilian writer named **Cristina Cairo**. In her books and on her blogs on the internet, Cristina explains every illness and how to arrive at its cure through understanding its causes. The girl only became aware of this writer and her teachings a few months before writing her own book. In one of this author's works, she learned — just as two American mediums had told her the year before — that *"problems in the breast are derived from problems with the father,"* and miraculously, coincidence or not, when the issue with her father was resolved, the illness, even though diagnosed as incurable, was immediately cured. Therefore, it is very worthwhile to read everything this writer has written, among other American writers and websites that also teach about this subject.

About the parents' behavior

Kat attributed almost everything that had been bad in her childhood, as well as lifelong problems and illnesses, to her parents' behavior.

Although most of the wrong decisions, the senseless desires, and often even the self-destructive behavior and depression had been caused by living with her parents, even that certainty was questioned and broken. Kat came to understand that her parents' behavior was not actually that bad. She reached the conclusion that her harshest criticisms — directed at the financial issue, toward her father's refusal to live a lifestyle considered normal by society — were unfair, and that this was what caused her the most pain and shame. She understood that her father was not, in fact, a losing alcoholic, as she had judged him to be, but rather the opposite; he had had several opportunities in life to be financially successful, but contrary to what she thought, it was not failure that made him choose addiction — it was the fact of not being accepted by society in the way he believed one was supposed to live. Kat's father had been a hippie when he was young and believed that that lifestyle of free love and lack of material possessions was the right way to live. However, the pressure from society, combined with that of her mother, became too heavy, and he succumbed to addiction in order to endure it.

Later, returning to various scenes from her life, the girl understood that she herself had had a problem with poverty since childhood, adopting a greedy behavior that aimed at money and financial success above all else. Her parents, in truth, despite everything, had tried to teach her that a simple life was not a bad life, and that humble people might even be happier than the richest ones — a truth that Kat always denied, with much fighting and disdain, only to later, through her own life experience, discover that once again she was the one who was wrong, and that her parents had been right about this. This led her to ask herself:

"What else might they have been right about?"

She did, indeed, have an explosive temperament, but by traveling the entire world and getting to know other families, she came to understand that her parents had passed on very important values to her. The more she learns each day about life, the more she sees that the conviction that they were wrong actually came from immaturity. Those phrases that mothers always say — *"when you grow up, you'll understand!"*, *"when you're older, you'll see that I'm right"* — make more and more sense. Age and life experience truly help us understand our parents' behavior more and more. So go easy on the criticism now! You will have children one day, you will be your parents' age one day, and only then will you be able to speak on the subject with knowledge and truth.

You tell me your parents don't understand you
But you don't understand your parents
You blame your parents for everything, that's absurd
They're children just like you
What will you be
When you grow up

"Pais e Filhos" | Legião Urbana
[Translator's note: These lyrics echo the recurring theme of intergenerational misunderstanding and emotional immaturity present throughout the chapter.]

All of this made her think: *"What if she hadn't been so difficult? What if she had listened a little more and been a little less resistant to any opinion, lifestyle, or to her parents' way of being when she was a child — would everything have been so hard?"* Her father wasn't unhappy for not having possessions; he didn't want to have anything. He believed that not caring about such things, just as not worrying about the future, was the right thing to do, and he felt good that way. It was she, her sister, and her mother who did not feel good, who did not share the same opinion — and life together became impossible.

Kat's father continues to this day to behave like a hippie. Now without a wife and without daughters, he lives a much quieter life, despite still struggling with alcohol addiction.

Kat, influenced by her mother's complaints, criticized people with hippie tendencies her entire life. She mocked them, made fun of their faces, belittled their life choices, considering them even dirty and lazy. Today, by irony of fate — as happened with everything else she once criticized — she lives in Los Angeles and is part of a community of people with a hippie lifestyle! She lived with them for almost a year, participating in weekly gatherings in which they sing and pray/meditate, asking for peace and for the awakening of the world. With them she learned the art of living well and happily; she learned what it truly means to live life. She understood the harm caused by the capitalist life she had been living, and how it affected her behavior and her health. She says that what truly saved her life was this group. Today she has friends, she has a family with them, and she feels that she found her place in the world there.

Adopting this lifestyle so different from the one she had before made her understand her father even more, and all of his behavior and rebellion. She met other people like him, who had chosen a life outside the capitalist standards of society and who were later forced back into a life of restriction because of pressure from family and work. She herself went through this and understood, once again, that one truly cannot be angry with anyone nor judge anyone based on anything — much less on something one does not know. Nowadays she laughs and tells her friends: *"Yesterday I laughed at hippies, thought they were all crazy — today I'm one of them."* No one really knows what tomorrow holds for us; in life, anything can happen!

About the sister

In one of the "astral wanderings," she was able to see two men who loved and respected each other deeply. They were old friends and smiled a lot. After some time, she understood that those two men were her and her sister.

The two had already met in many lives, and were beings completely sympathetic to one another — the opposite of what it seemed here on Earth. From that day on, Kat took upon herself the mission of understanding her sister in everything that she sees and feels.

Her sister has ways, beliefs, and behaviors very different from Kat's, which is why conversations and coexistence became very difficult. But what seemed impossible was, in truth, merely the lack of seeing the sisterhood that existed — and that was very strong — between the two spirits. Kat visited a "life" in which the two were men, and just friends. And, to her surprise, the Voice showed her that they had been born as sisters in this life at the request of their own spirits. Because they were very close and highly complementary spirits, they were given permission to be born together in the same home, with the same mother and the same father, already knowing that this existence would be very difficult for both of them from the start due to the family's imbalance.

There were several life situations in which Kat returned to the past and saw things her sister went through, and things her sister did for the sake of the family, shown from above. It was as if Kat had gone back in time and hovered over the situations, seeing this time her sister's version rather than her own. She saw that, of all the members of the family, her sister was in fact the most evolved in the aspects of love, peace, and patience. She was the most balanced, the one with a calming behavior, and she was there exactly for that reason. She had been given the mission of maintaining calm and balance within the family.

However, looking from the outside, Kat was able to see, feel, and understand for the first time how much her sister had suffered as well within the same house — and how lonely she was. She felt extremely bad upon seeing that she had in fact always been on the opposite side of her sister, always an enemy, and never the other way around. She saw that for her sister, life had been even more cruel and much more difficult, because with anger in the heart — as Kat dealt with family members — one suffers much less: the problems are masked and suffering is postponed. But with love, it is not so.

With love, anger could not be used as an ally; everything was felt brutally **right at the surface**, and her sister lived that way — suffering alone and acting in the best way possible, without ever hating anyone, without ever stepping over anyone. She was a delicate and sensitive being who now, more than anything, needed help and the share of fraternal love of which she had been deprived her entire life. She never had the support she needed, but now, upon seeing and understanding everything, Kat promised the Voice that she would support her. And with the simple act of just listening with the ears of a friend, of feeling her with the heart of a friend and not of a rival as before, the relationship between the two changed — and twenty years of fights and competition ended right there, as if they had never existed. Now, what Kat herself had many times declared impossible happened, and today the two are best friends and have an unshakable bond of complicity.

About humanity

That which she had feared the most, that which she had criticized the most throughout her entire life — for she liked no one and did not seem to identify with anyone on Earth. In one of the astral visits, she was able to see all people — enemies and friends here on Earth — walking hand in hand and hugging one another like good friends. She encountered her own enemies from Earth, people she did not like or toward whom she held resentment, and met them in other planes where both spirits embraced and talked, saying how foolish the disputes down here were…

They smiled, knowing how unnecessary the fights were. They showed Kat the fact that **all**, **ALL**, without exception, **ALL** creatures were friends and loved one another, because they were created that way — and that all bad moods and misunderstandings were nothing more than the normal misunderstanding caused by the ignorance that originates on Earth.

When the spirit begins to live on a higher plane, the entire idea of conflict stays here; it does not accompany it to any higher plane. Therefore, in other words, **there are no enemy spirits in heaven**. All beings are connected by a cord of love, and no matter what one may have done to another, the destiny of two enemies is to meet and embrace again, realigning themselves with the cycle of love — the only thing common to all spirits and to all dimensions. It was shown to her clearly how each spirit, regardless of its behavior here on Earth toward another, would still have love for its enemy. It was explained to her why fights happen, and that each person merely perpetuates their own mistakes and their own ignorance, unintentionally reflecting onto others their own fears and insecurities, in a difficult cycle — until growth becomes possible and universal wisdom and intelligence can prevail, allowing them to return once again to the original state, which is always complicity and love toward one's brothers, whether friends or enemies.

Our enemies have a greater mission in our lives than those we love and see as friends. Within your enemies are hidden great secrets and answers about yourself, since what you dislike in the other is, in truth, merely a reflection of what you do not like in yourself… Your friends give you support so that you do not forget that love and help exist in the world, and so that you may recognize spirits who have already been your companions in other lives. Your enemies, however, are brothers who teach you great lessons in life, making you stronger and more capable of winning great battles. **Enemies have a great mission in our lives.** To them we must attribute great victories; if it were not for them, a large part of those victories would never have come to pass.

They are responsible for great moments of strength and success, and for this reason they too must receive gratitude — *"remain grateful even to your enemies,"* the Voice once said to the girl. The Voice showed her great moments throughout life in which her enemies — in this life and in others — brought her profound lessons and were agents of great deeds.

"Think that your enemies also have a father, a mother, friends, love, just like you, and that if they have a problem with you and you with them, it is not by chance; the problem must be understood and resolved as quickly as possible, never prolonged, for any reason whatsoever."

About the boy, the Taurus

Kat had one of the greatest and most painful surprises of her life. The Voice revealed to her that the boy was what we on Earth call a *"soulmate."* The way it chose to reveal this was by making her live inside the boy's body in several past lives, in which they were together and always shared the same feelings, the same ideas, and had similar personalities. Seeing all of this was truly a long story. And what sent chills through her even more was something she expected even less: that always — in every single story — she was the one in the wrong. And, being embodied within the young man himself, she was able to participate in all the arguments and moments in which she offended him and broke his heart, feeling in her own skin everything he felt while she said things believing she was right… And perhaps she truly was at that moment — but the reasons dated back much further and were far deeper than she could possibly have known.

And so she saw — and continues to see every day since then, since September 2015, when the Voice revealed Itself for the first time while the girl was awake.

She saw — and continues to see — all events of the present and the past as they truly are, or at least she understands, in the moment, that they are far greater than what can be seen, and shortly afterward the reason why they occurred is revealed. For example, on one of the days when the girl was walking through the streets of Los Angeles, the Voice told her that she needed to talk to a friend who was going through some problems of soul immaturity and was seeking to understand life. And so, simply transcribing the words of the Voice:

“LIFE IS LIKE A MAP. IMAGINE A MAP
OPEN IN FRONT OF YOU, 2 METERS BY 2 METERS.
NOW PLACE YOUR CLOSED FIST ON TOP
OF THE MAP… DO YOU SEE THE CIRCUMFERENCE
OF YOUR FIST IN RELATION TO THE SIZE OF THE MAP?
THAT IS WHAT YOU SEE OF YOUR LIFE,
AND THE SIZE OF THE ENTIRE MAP
IS WHAT IT REALLY IS.”

Everything you see is not even 5% of what your life truly is. Your duty as a human being is to find, while alive, a way to expand your mind enough so that you may expand your vision as much as possible.

So be careful with the things you believe, be careful with what you base your problems on, and also with your beliefs — since everything you see and believe in is based on that portion of life that your eyes can reach, while the scenario is much, much larger! Therefore, no matter what you see now, that vision of yours, however reasonable it may seem at the moment, in truth — when observed from the point of view of the entire map — may make no sense at all.

I continue in strength, in Light, and in grace, learning, living, and seeing every day. Every day, and with each day that I see, the more I discover and the more I see, it is not as if only my knowledge grows, but rather as if my map grows along with it.

With every centimeter that my knowledge grows, the *“diameter of my fist”* expands two centimeters on the map…

Lately, I have limited myself to asking the Voice very few questions, allowing only its sound to teach me.

If you have read this book up to this point, and feel that it has improved your life or your day in some way, that it opened doors to clearer thinking, if it resolved doubts that troubled you, bringing you peace and happiness, please recommend it to as many people as possible. Give it as a birthday gift, a Christmas gift, a New Year's gift; give it as a **gift of life**. Recommend the book, but do not reveal its contents — simply say what the messages contained in it did for *you*, in your own particular and incredible existence on Earth.

The message contained in this book is very important for the development of consciousness and, consequently, for peace of mind — leading, through it, finally, to peace in a universal way. Be a messenger of the Light as well, and allow it, through this book, to spread and reach those you believe need it most, those you believe do not need it, and everyone else.

Find more enlightening texts and messages of Light also on my Instagram page **@kattorres**, where I post *"messages from the Voice"* fairly often (whenever She allows).

I AM YOU, AND YOU ARE ME, WE ARE ONE — ALL SO UNIQUE AND AT THE SAME TIME PART OF AN INFINITE WHOLE. THERE CANNOT BE PEACE IN THE WORLD IF YOU ARE NOT AT PEACE, AND VICE VERSA.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE VOICE, FOR IT SPEAKS TO YOU AT ALL TIMES — THROUGH FEELINGS, THROUGH EVENTS, AND THROUGH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU, JUST AS IT SPOKE THROUGH THIS BOOK.
PAY ATTENTION TO THE SIGNS.

Judge not. The truth will be revealed to you when you are ready to see it.

Book written by **Kat Torres** and by the Voice.
Praised be.

The Author

Beauty and intelligence

The Brazilian model **Kat Torres** was born in Belém do Pará, into a poor family. She began acting in theater and working as a model when she was only **7 years old**. By the age of **14**, she had already participated in several stage productions and posed for numerous well-known advertising campaigns.

At **17**, she began her career abroad.

More recently, she decided to take a break from her work in fashion in order to study **Cinema** at one of the most prestigious schools in **New York**, the **Susan Batson Studio**.
[Translator's note: "Susan Batson" refers to the renowned acting teacher and acting studio in New York.]

Her ironic and humorous side made her even more widely known when she created the profile **Coisas da Kat**, with more than **1,300,000 followers on Instagram** and over **500,000 on Facebook**. This is without mentioning her personal profile, **@kattorres**, with more than **100,000 followers**.

Currently, Kat lives in **Los Angeles, United States**, where she develops other artistic talents, such as acting, singing, dancing, painting, and photography.

Have you ever caught yourself thinking about the facts of your day-to-day life that seem more like *signs* guiding you to choose — or not choose — certain actions? After reading this book, you will see that events and coincidences that apparently have no explanation will begin to make sense.

The Voice shows, in a simple way, *why* each minute of our lives happened as it did, and where the meaning and motivation come from when we make this or that decision.

In the book, the main character goes through situations and common problems that all of us experience, such as the first kiss, first love, the encounter with a soulmate, financial difficulties and successes, health, illness, and even the loss of a very close family member. But in all of these moments, we can see the work of the **Supreme Invisible Help**, which is present with the character at all times, supporting and guiding her in everything — showing that it does the same for all of us.